



## Window on Jordan

## Come and buy from the 'baleh' at dirt-cheap prices!

By Ibtisam Awadat  
Star Staff Writer

"COME CLOSE and you won't lose, don't buy but take a look" a young peddler was yelling, inviting people to buy from his *baleh*. This comprises of goods that are sprawled on the pavement in front of Al Hussein Mosque in downtown Amman. Many peddlers similarly lay their goods alongside the pavement. The old-used stuff is less expensive so the middle and poor classes are permanent customers.

All the way down to the city center, you can find them, salesmen in shops and peddlers carrying four or more old-used items of clothes.

Pedestrians can hear them yelling from all directions. "Take three trousers for your son or daughter for only a dinar." Another salesman sings to you "take four pairs of shoes for your wife or mother for only a dinar."

But prices are not necessarily cheap. Some things which you can buy from second-hand shops can be very expensive, depending on what you choose, of course.

"Our boss travels every two months to Holland to buy stock and second-hand shoes, clothes and even dolls," the owner of the Holland shop told *The Star*.

"Our prices vary and depend on the quality of

the items, we have things for only one dinar and have shoes from European countries for as much as 20 dinars."

Even the used local shoes can be bought for as much as JD 6 or JD 7. The owner claims that they sell 15 "European" shoes everyday.

In Mohammad Abed Al Halim's store, two employees were helping two women from the Far East to buy curtains. One of the women said sometimes, new shops don't even sell the kind of quality goods that I find here.

"Our clients are from all walks of life, poor, rich, from different Arab countries and even for-

Look, I don't have time to bargain, there is a lot more on the phone who want to buy!



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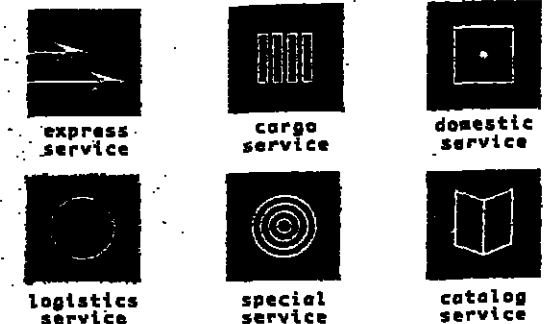
# The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

**Le Jourdain**  
Supplément en français du Star

En Irak :  
Des Jordaniens  
exécutés pour rien ?

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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

## Deputies vote for government, but only after gruelling attack

By Raed Al Abed  
Star Staff Writer

IN THEIR first major debate since their election to the Lower House, legislators in the 13th Parliament were eager to dispel allegations that they were "in the pocket of the government."

The government sat for two days and listened to some grueling attacks by deputies. But in the end it won a vote of confidence. Fifty-one of the 79 deputies endorsed Dr Abdel Salam Al Majali's 24-member Cabinet, which took office in March while the previous Parliament was in recess. Fifteen deputies, mainly Islamists, leftists and independents voted against the government, while 12 deputies abstained.

In his reply, Dr Majali promised that his government will do its best to meet the deputies' demands.

In spite of a comfortable win in Monday's session, observers believe the government's task in the Lower House would not be an easy one.

Judging from the speeches of deputies, observers believe the government is facing a

"de-politicized House" which is emphasizing on a local agenda to fight poverty and unemployment, in addition to meeting other urgent demands of constituents.

The majority of the 55 speakers during the two-day confidence debate lashed out at the government's failure to create strategies to fight poverty and curb unemployment. Twenty deputies attacked the government for failing to stamp out corruption. They said the government has failed to solve the problem of administrative sluggishness. At least 16 deputies accused the government of violating its own rules, demanding that it stops any new hiring in the public sector. However, they said the government endorsed a number of unjust employment practices which did not take into account people's qualifications.

Thirteen deputies criticized the government for its unconditional compliance with harsh conditions dictated by the IMF and World Bank, whose consequences, they said, had gravely reflected themselves on the cost of living for Jordanians.

Twenty-seven deputies warned of the results of the government's haste in privatizing the country's strategic industries. They said this privatization process will "pave" the country in the hands of foreign investors.

They called on the government to slow down the process of selling its shares in public industries to foreign companies and to maintain a proper state share in these establishments.

Only 10 deputies directly attacked the government for "lowering the ceiling of public liberties," while 31 deputies opposed the amended press and publication law, considering it as a set-back for democracy. About 40 deputies criticized the government's intention to draft new laws that govern political parties and professional associations. Many warned the government of the negative results of such assaults on public freedoms and advised the government to consider these important sectors "as partners not enemies."

However, few deputies focused on the importance of a modernized elections law.

On international and Arab relations, most of the deputies praised the results of the Islamic conference in Tehran last week and asked the government to invest Jordan's gains to strengthen its relations with the Arab and Muslim countries.

At least 20 deputies asked the government to empower Jordan's respected diplomacy in lifting sanctions imposed against Iraq, Sudan and Libya.

The peace process did not receive much attention by the majority of speakers. Only six deputies were critical of the current peace process, while 25 deputies criticized the Israeli right-wing government for the deterioration in the Middle East peace process. Regarding normalization with Israel, 17 legislators expressed their criticism to the government's warm relations with Israel, while half of them opposed any kind of normalization.

Observers believe that the political leanings of deputies in the confidence sessions brought to the surface the competition of power centers in the country. In addition to the scattered opposition members, the Parliamentary Coalition Bloc, which is composed of 13 deputies, made a surprise move. Ten of its members abstained from voting. This bloc includes four ex-ministers in the government of Abdel Karim Al Kabarti.

Mr Ali Abu Al Ragheb, a former minister of trade and industry, who spoke on behalf of the bloc, launched scathing attack on the government's economic policies, particularly those concerning the privatization process of public enterprises, and also opposed the government's intention to introduce new laws for the press, political parties, and professional associations. Abu Al Ragheb also criticized the government unabashed openness towards Israel.

Another strong bloc emerged during the sessions. Al Wefaq is led by two leaders of the National Constitutional Party, Abdel Rao'uf Al



His Majesty King Hussein inspects the first batch of F-16s fighters Wednesday at Muwafiq Salti air base. Four of the 16 US-made fighters were delivered to the Royal Air Force from the United States.

## Diplomatic repercussions continue in wake of Iraqi executions

By Ilham Sadeq  
Star Staff Writer

JORDANIAN-IRAQI diplomatic relations appear to have taken a tumble after the Iraqi authorities executed four Jordanian nationals charged of smuggling spare parts, two weeks ago.

Since the executions, tensions marked the otherwise warm ties between the two countries.

The Jordanian reaction was strong and senior government officials describe the sentence as excessive. His Majesty King Hussein condemned the action referring to it as a "heinous crime" and stressed that "the blood of Jordanians is not cheap."

However, the two sides are keen not to escalate tensions and gave much effort to calm down the situation amidst assurances made by some Iraqi officials to commute the death sentence of the fifth Jordanian

involved in the same alleged smuggling charges. But, it is not clear whether Ammar Ghalib Shehabuddin will be freed or not.

What added fuel to the uproar over the executions, is what happened last Sunday, when Iraq executed a Jordanian reportedly charged of murder.

Despite the fact that some local dailies stated that the executed is not Ammar Ghalib Shehabuddin, rumors spread among people that it must be him. Many have said that if he is not the same person, then why conceal his name.

When *The Star* contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, officials said that the executed Jordanian is not the fifth person who is allegedly involved in the smuggling.

*The Star* had the opportunity to speak to his brother over the phone. While in tears

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## Netanyahu to relay West Bank 'security interests' map to Albright

By Marjorie Miller  
JERUSALEM—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will give Secretary of State Madeleine Albright a map outlining Israel's general "security interests" in the occupied West Bank when they meet in Paris on Thursday, but he will not specify what land Israel intends to hand over to the Palestinians in coming months.

Despite marathon cabinet meetings on the pull-back and consultations with coalition partners, Jewish settlers and rabbis in the last few days, government officials said Tuesday that the cabinet still

has not agreed on details for a long-overdue troop redeployment in the West Bank.

The government is trying to establish its position for final peace negotiations—a map of Israel's final borders—before handing over any more land. But the right-religious coalition is deeply divided over this. The Israeli media reported that Netanyahu will tell Albright he is prepared to give the Palestinians no less than 10 percent of West Bank territory that Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

But US and Israeli officials insisted he will not present her with hard numbers. "I will cer-

tainly update Secretary of State Albright about our considerations," Netanyahu told a meeting of mayors in Herzliya on Tuesday. "It's possible that I will discuss maps but there are no final maps we can show her because we are in the middle of the discussion."

Israeli officials said they do not expect to make a decision on the extent and locations of the redeployment until mid-January, after what is expected to be a tough political battle over next year's national budget.

The Israeli government then wants to wait five months more to implement the pull-

back to see if the Palestinians comply with their commitments to cooperate in fighting terrorism against Israel. Although Albright apparently had hoped for more details than she will get in Thursday's meeting, US and Palestinian officials say they are willing to wait until after the Israeli budget fight to keep the two issues separate.

"We're prepared to listen to whatever they have to say," said a senior US official. "We expect the prime minister to be as concrete and specific as possible. ... But we know he is

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## Afghanistan

## A window seat on the bus

By Paddy Linehan

THE LEADERS of the Taliban now controlling much of Afghanistan heap scorn on the western world and its values. Many of their extreme perceptions of western morals and disposition towards them and their faith are gleaned from the media. But you wonder about the impact of chance encounters in the past, when passage into Iran and Afghanistan was easier.

Some westerners acted with a superior attitude that soured relationships. I was an embarrassed witness to one such incident.

When crossing from Iran into Afghanistan, that side of the border was so shabby it was almost homely. The only near thing was a line of ancient battle-worn minibuses. I wasn't sure at first whether they were still in use.

Suddenly, a madly waving young man sprang from one and approached me with good-natured emergency. "Queekly, queekly for Herat."

His urgency was convincing and I huddled in thinking he was about to take off. I was the first. About every half hour another soul made it over the border. He repeated his "queek, queek," so it took only seven or eight hours to fill the vehicle.

In the intervals we became acquainted. He wore the dark pyjamas and flat cap with rolled brim that is de rigueur in these parts. Chitrail caps they are called. He had a gold tooth that illuminated his frequent smile. He did one return trip to Herat every day, he told me. It was a good living and he enjoyed his life. "I like to meet the foreigner," he enthused.

Not after today he wouldn't.

Mohammed was his name. At intervals he repeated his welcome like a mantra: Ahlan Wah-Sahlan. His slowly assembling clientele was made up mostly of local travellers.

When we were almost full, three other westerners joined us. There was a quiet Danish guy, and Arlene and Gary from "New York City." Gary knew most things and Arlene was very busy with chewing gum. She displayed an amount of skin that a woman shouldn't in Afghanistan.

She chewed the gum with her mouth open. She would get a thin film between her lips and then she'd poke her tongue through it and flash it victoriously from one corner to the other. I wanted to shout out that I wasn't with them. But they imposed themselves on me for my protection.

Gary knew what these fellows were like

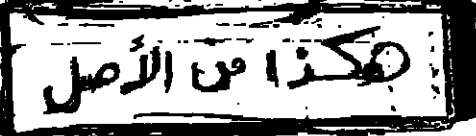


The other side of Afghanistan, the one we are rarely privileged to see

and wasn't going to let them get away with anything. Mohammed started to collect his fares. It took a while before he got to the foreigners. Gary was watching with

the keen eye of one whose main hobby is counting money.

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# Come and buy from the *baleh* at dirt-cheap prices!

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elgners," said Ahmad, another salesman from the same shop.



"Our sales increase on Friday and in the first days of the month, because people receive their pay-checks then."

"I receive invitations from many European countries to buy stock and travel to Germany, Holland and Belgium frequently," said Mr Mousa Nabhan, a wholesale dealer of stock and used wear.

"I import containers that are full of different clothes and we have two containers, one can be filled by 9 tons and the other one by 18," Mr Nabhan added that one ton of clothes may cost JD 700.

Away from clothes, sellers can sell you anything you want—these include electrical goods specially recorders, videotapes and cassettes. To be assured of their quality, you can even listen to the cassette recorders on the spot.

counting to pedestrians how many channels they can receive.

In the furniture field salesmen claim that their bedrooms are imported from Italy, while the dining rooms from another country, and it's all made from the best wood.

"Before 1980, I used to sell new furniture, but I found it unprofitable," the owner of Zeidan Syuri shop told *The Star*.

"I don't import, but I buy from people—sometimes we receive calls from people leaving the country and want to get rid of their furniture, so we go up there and check it out." As we were sitting, the ladies were unloading the goods into the shop.

"Our clients, most of the time are young couples, who want to furnish their houses with some of our goods."



## Netanyahu to relay West Bank 'security interests' map to Albright

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moving away from numbers. Netanyahu has nothing that he has said internally and he wants to do that first, before he comes to us with numbers."

The Palestinians accepted the few weeks' delay but rejected Israel's intent, then, to wait five more months before

moving its troops. Israel still fully controls about 73 percent of the West Bank and has security control over all but about 3 percent. While Israel has been saying it would relinquish 6 percent to 10 percent of the West Bank, the United States has been pressing for a "credible" redeployment that begins in the double digits.

The Palestinians have demanded 30 percent of the territory in the next redeployment.

Albright is to meet with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in London after seeing Netanyahu. She met separately with the two leaders last week in a bid to break the nine-month impasse in the

Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Meanwhile, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon have given the cabinet maps outlining how much of the West Bank each believes Israel must hold on to in a final agreement with the Palestinians to guarantee the country's security.

The Palestinians want all of the land that Israel occupied in the West Bank, as well as East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

At Tuesday's cabinet meeting, Sharon could be heard through the doors screaming at his colleagues that the government was going too far and crossing "red lines" of Israeli interests. He calmed down before the meeting broke for the night. The ministers were to resume discussions Wednesday but officials expected no decision before the cabinet takes a scheduled tour of the West Bank on Monday.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Deputies vote for government, but only after gruelling attack

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Rawabdeh and Abdel Hadi Al Majali. All members of this bloc gave the thumbs up to the government.

During the session, the political rights of Jordanians of Palestinian origin were the focus of two fellow deputies: Mr Hamudh Farahneh and Abdel Al Majeed Al Aqtash. Both asked the government to create a balance by giving this sector fair opportunities in the different state's institutions.

By contrast, Dr Ahmad Owaidi Al Ahdadi, an ultra-nationalist, said that East Jordanians must have a priority in the state's institutions. He also attacked some ministers in the Majali's Cabinet on grounds of their personal political backgrounds. He said his vote of confidence will be in favor of the government if the latter cleaned-up its ranks of those elements, however, at the end of the session. Dr Owaidi voted for the government.

## Arab Bank reports strong demand for Capital Guaranteed Fund

AMMAN (Star)—Arab Bank has announced that its Capital Guaranteed Fund has generated strong demand amongst investors seeking security and high return potential for their capital. Launched into branches across the Middle East, the first available from 13 September until 13 October, and the second from 27 September until 27 October, the fund has attracted in excess of \$100 million from investors.

Commenting on the suc-

cess of the Arab Bank Capital Guaranteed Fund, Khalid Shoman, deputy chairman and president of Arab Bank said "We are delighted that both existing and new customers have responded so positively to this investment product. Arab Bank looks forward to introducing additional new products over the forthcoming year as we continue to meet the increasingly sophisticated investment needs of existing and future customers across the Middle East."



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## A window seat on the bus

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"How much?" he accused Mohammed when our turn came.

"Two dollars, please," Mohammed smiled, proud of his English and oozing bonhomie. I reached quickly for the amount, anxious to divert the argument that I felt was swelling in Gary. Standing up he said: "No way! I know the fare: you don't rip off me and my friends, One dollar!"

I died with embarrassment. Everyone stared and Gary and Arlene loved it. They took it as admiration. Mohammed was

shaken but he put his request once more. Gary replied with a dissertation about how things are done in the US. He was really educating these folk.

Mohammed was taken aback. He thought for a little while then shrugged his shoulders and walked away. Even from his back I could see he was deeply offended. And was Gary triumphant?

"See, that's the way to deal with these sharks," he boasted, still standing even after the bus had shuddered into motion. He was so puffed up by victory he couldn't stop swaying, like an ice hockey hooligan. I could

find no safe place for my eyes. Everywhere they caught

We trundled along corrugated roads from desolation to desert. Gary eventually settled back into his seat with a self-congratulatory shuffle. Arlene cuddled in close in approval and admiration of her man. The locals feigned disinterest. The ribbon of road seemed to stretch forever to the horizon. Every 10 or 15 minutes Gary would get a relapse of victory and have to stand up again to explain how he defeated these people at their game.

"That will teach him to rip off a United States citizen. You follow me Paddy, I'll see you right." It was just after one of these triumphant outbursts that Mohammed brought the bus to a deliberate halt.

I felt ominous. He turned off the engine. We were about 60km from the border and 50 from Herat. It was as desolate a place as ever I had seen. The sun was setting and nothing could be seen between us and the distant red horizon. The silence after the raucous noise of the engine was eerie. The wind whistled.

Mohammed came down the centre very slowly. He stood for a second and then said quietly: "Now, \$2, please." Gary's jaw dropped. You could see realization slowly hitting him. I wanted to jump up and clap Mohammed on the back but instead I dove into my belly bag and held out \$2. He ignored me. He just waited while Gary scoured every pocket trying to think of a way out.

Eventually, he had to hand over. Not finished yet, this talented operator held his receiving hand up high, forcing Gary to reach up to it in clear view of all.

I am sure that in that moment was forged a strand in the mesh of resentment of things western.

Then it was prayer time; everyone got out and gave thanks to Allah.

Financial Times Syndication

This leaves the Baathists, who are holding their annual conference on 26 December. Their event will bring what is being dubbed as the party season into full circle.

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## JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional  
report on Jordanian  
news and views edited  
by Marwan Al Asmar

## Royal pardon

■ About 64 people from the Northern Badia Region were released this week as a result of a special Royal Pardon made by His Majesty King Hussein. These people were earlier arrested because of rioting.

## JTC employees threaten strike

■ The employees of the Jordan Telecommunication Co. are going on an open strike, as of Saturday. The 4300 employees say that they will continue with the strike action in protest of the company's policy and its stand to "close the door on dialogue" with them. The employees are demanding an upward readjustment of the salary scale, be given a 13th and 14th month salary as is the case with other companies, and a comprehensive health insurance.

## F-16s in Jordan

■ Jordan has received the first batch of the F-16 fighter jets from the United States earlier this week. Joint exercises between the Royal Jordanian Air Force and the American Air Force took place in Azraq last summer to train Jordanian Air Force pilots. The 16 planes will join the fleet of the Royal Jordanian Air Force. Already a number of Jordanian pilots and technicians went to the USA for further training.

## Medicine

■ The fee for medical treatment in government hospitals and public health centers could double. The issue is still being discussed. Although basically free, there is usually a medical fee charged for those who can afford it. Once approved, the increases are expected to take effect in the New Year.

## Penal Code to be amended

■ Minister of Justice Mr Riad Al Shakaa said his ministry formed a special committee to study the Penal Code with a view to amending it. The minister said that the idea is to modernize the present Penal Code in line with the a package of laws that are awaiting endorsement by Parliament.

## Workers in UNRWA

■ The Executive Committee of the Federation of Workers in UNRWA has sent a memorandum to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi A. Annan, explaining at length its position vis-a-vis the local management of the UNRWA organization, led by its Secretary General Mr Peter Hansen. The memo stated that the workers have tried, on numerous occasions, to explain to the local management their plight but to no avail. Hence, the Executive Committee has appealed to Mr Annan to intervene, and has given the management three months to readress their demands which include the improvement in salaries and wages, and the introduction of new positive policies that relate to early retirement and compensation. However, it is suggested that some of the demands would be impossible to carry out, because the UNRWA financial budget already faces financial crisis. However, the workers, who have started industrial action since the beginning of the year are threatening more of the same thing if their demands are not met.

## PM given vote of confidence, talks about fighting corruption

AMMAN (Star)—Prime Minister Abdel Salam Al Majali won what political observers are saying a thunderous vote of confidence, Monday, after a two-day debate of the government statement. He received a "yes" vote from 51 Lower House deputies out of 78. At the end of the debate, Dr Majali gave a two-hour speech on the policies of the government.

One of the issues he spoke on is that of corruption and financial mismanagement. He said that it's "unnatural" element was spoken about extensively in the Koran.

He pointed out that fighting this unnatural element is a major part of government policy. He said that the Bureau of Monitoring and Control is working hard in this regard.

He added that the Anti-Corruption Directorate has already sent to the courts since 1996, 83 cases involving corruption and mismanagement, of these cases 32 were filed this year alone. He continued that 86 cases of financial embezzlement were also sent to the Public Prosecutor. He pointed out that there was also 75 cases of bribery. ■



Dr Majali congratulated after the vote

## Diplomatic repercussions continue in wake of executions

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he only said, "It is my brother Mohammad Ali Al Sabah who was charged of murder." Mr Mutaweh later told reporters that Jordan was only informed of the execution four days after the sentence was carried out, but he added that he didn't yet receive any official statement from Iraq. The Star contacted the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, but strongly denied that a fifth man was executed, and said it was rumors.

However such a clarification does not mean that the situation is now back to normal. Earlier Jordan expelled eight Iraqi diplomats. But recent reports point out that Jordan's charge d'affaires who was recalled to Amman, is expected to resume his post in Iraq within the next two weeks.

According to an earlier statement made by Minister of Interior, Nahir Rashid and Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh the Iraqi authorities promised to release 140 Jordanian prisoners in Iraqi jails soon.

But Minister of State for Information Affairs, Dr Samir Mutaweh, who hopes that the fifth won't be executed, is doubtful of whether the Iraqi authorities will stick to their

promises. He was quoted as saying that intensive contacts have been made on high levels to prevent the executions of the four Jordanians, however "we were shocked after the sentence was passed."

Nonetheless, official sources also reiterate that Prime Minister, Dr Abdel Salam Majali has been given assurances, during the Islamic Summit in Tehran, by the Iraqi Deputy President, Taha Yassin Ramadan that the fifth accused won't be executed and as well 140 prisoners will be released.

A statement released by the Human Rights Watch (HRW), Middle East revealed that the organization is concerned by reports from the Al Douji family in Jordan that they have lost contact with a younger Al-Douji brother who travelled to Iraq in October to visit his detained brothers.

It called on the Iraqi government to investigate the alleged disappearance of the younger Al Douji and to provide information about his whereabouts.

"Among nations of the world, the trend is toward abolition of the death penalty. Iraq's increasing use of capital punishment is alarming," the HRW report said calling Iraq to reconsider such

cruel punishment and to fulfill its obligations under International Law.

Earlier The Star met with the wife of one of the four that had been executed in Iraq, Zohour Nsirah said that her husband had been to Iraq since 1982 working as a doctor. In 1995 he started trading in spareparts, clothes and confectionery. It was in early January of this year that he was arrested by the Iraqi authorities on the border with Jordan. Three other men that were with him at the time were also arrested. According to Mrs Nsirah, he was kept in prison, with the others for three months. After that, she adds, she paid a bail of 1,400,000 Iraqi dinars (JD 2240 approx) and released. She maintained that they were re-arrested after 20 days and stayed in jail till 4 October when they were finally sentenced to death.

However, Zohour Nsirah suggested that on 29 November another decision was made to revoke the sentence, but one week later the four were executed. On the same day she received the body of her husband. Mrs Nsirah phoned the Jordanian charge d'affaires in Baghdad to inquire about what happened, but he seemed not to know about the executions. ■

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### BBC, MBC and Radio Monte Carlo to broadcast locally

AMMAN (Star)—At least two foreign radio stations will start broadcasting on the local FM frequency beginning February of next year. A Saudi owned station based in London, MBC, has started broadcasting locally one month ago. It will be joined earlier next year by the Arabic service of the BBC and Radio Monte Carlo.

BBC's transmission on the local FM frequency will be launched in a ceremony held for the occasion. During the ceremony, His Royal Highness Prince Hassan will speak for half an hour on air with Radio Jordan and the BBC.

Madiba Al Madfa'i, a senior broadcaster at the BBC Arabic Service told *Ad-Dustour* daily that the launch of the service was scheduled to start in mid-December but it was postponed because of a delay in the arrival of the required equipment. The BBC Arabic Service has a similar re-broadcasting agreement with Qatar.

The stations transmit their signal via satellite to Radio Jordan where the signal is relayed via FM transmitters to be received locally.

Presently, both stations can be heard on the MW and SW frequencies whose signals emanate from Europe and are relayed from Cyprus.

The re-transmission agreements were signed by Minister of State for Information Affairs Dr Samir Mutaweh recently in London and Paris. The two agreements were approved under the cultural cooperation protocols with both the UK and France.

Under existing laws, Radio Jordan has a monopoly over local radio transmission. A number of Jordanians have applied to open private radio and TV stations but were told to wait until the current law is changed. ■

# London Bridge

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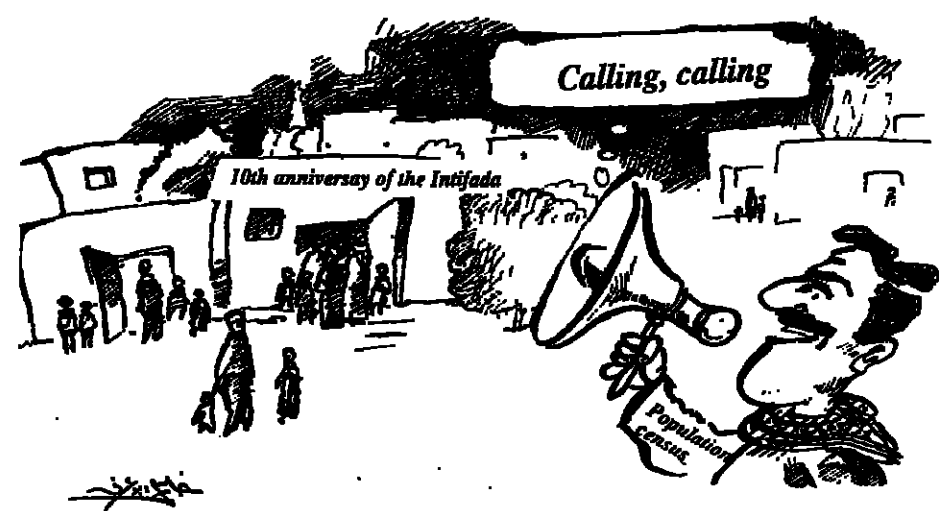
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## Our Say...

### Crime and punishment in Iraq

JORDANIANS HAVE condemned the execution of four of their nationals by Iraq on charges of smuggling car spareparts. The crime does not correspond to the punishment leveled against those Jordanians and the Iraqi government has not taken into consideration the effect of these executions on the special relationship between both the Jordanian and the Iraqi people.

Efforts are now underway to save the life of a fifth Jordanian, also accused of smuggling. Iraq is said to have agreed to spare his life.

While we sympathize with the families of the victims of the Iraqi "justice" system, we should also remember that Iraqi laws differ from Jordanian ones. Someone who is accused of vandalism in Singapore can expect to be publicly caned, while he could walk with a minor fine in New York City. The punishment for possessing illegal drugs in Malaysia is definitely more severe than in the Netherlands.

The executions have brought to the limelight a number of issues. In a country where civil and legal institutions are either non-existent or crippled, how can basic human rights of people be protected? This is a question that today puzzles many Arabs as they try to formulate a consistent stand towards Iraq, a country under a brutal siege that is responsible for a human tragedy the world can no longer ignore.

Still, Iraq is not a democratic country and its people have suffered from many wars and conflicts over the past two decades. The regime stands responsible for many atrocities and violations of human rights. But one should not confuse sympathy for the Iraqi people, as they suffer from UN sanctions, with support for the Iraqi regime or the Iraqi political system.

The responsibility for reforming or replacing the political structure in Iraq falls on the Iraqi people themselves. This is a principle in international relations that the world has agreed upon and respected. Any direct foreign intervention in that process is not only illegal, but counterproductive as well. It will unleash a cycle of violence and polarize the country even further. It raises moral as well as political questions. Who, for example, should carry out the task of changing undesired regimes, on what basis, when and at what cost?

Iraq is not a model country. But it is also not the exception in the club of international communities. Certainly isolation and collective punishment are not the way to reform regimes that are accused of not being democratic. But while some countries, like the United States for example, resort to these punitive measures, its European allies do not. Even the US is selective when it applies these measures, choosing to treat Iran, Sudan and Libya like pariahs, but still courting states that have opposing political systems such as China, Vietnam and Saudi Arabia.

In Jordan, we should maintain our passion towards the humanitarian suffering of the Iraqi people, while harnessing that passion before it overwhelms us. We should draw the line between our crusade to lift the sanctions, and dictating to the Iraqis how they should rule themselves. On the other hand, we should also take into account the need to preserve our national interests when it comes to dealing with Iraq or any other country for that matter. If we want to apply our own value system on every country before we deal with it, then our black-list will include many countries other than Iraq.

## Letters to the Editor

### He allows 5,000 children to die every month

To The Editor,

Every Year the president of the United States receives a turkey as a traditional present. This turkey is supposed to be killed and eaten in commemoration of the first Thanksgiving in which the Pilgrims and the Indians sat down together to celebrate the bounty of the harvest, and give Thanks to God.

The President has a soft heart for this bird, he grants it freedom and let it go to spend the rest of its life basking in the sun and enjoying the luxury of living in a farm.

It is great to have soft feelings for birds and animals and President Clinton, no doubt, falls in this category.

Also, when it comes to the Iraqi children he is different and his heart hardens and becomes like a rock. He wants the sanctions to stay as long as President Saddam Hussein is the leader of that country and as long as Iraq is standing up against the injustices that America is imposing on the Arab Nation. The president and his aides are creating more problems to the Iraqi government. Every time Iraq complies, Washington creates

other excuses, and the Iraqi children keep dying at an average of 5,000 a month, and those who survive become deformed.

United States' fleet is in the Arabian Gulf with its might and full power to be used against Iraq without any warning.

A president like Clinton who supports sanctions that kill children does not hesitate to use such devastating power to keep Iraq under continuous destruction. And in the mean time he gives full support to "Israel" to do another vicious attack against our nation in Palestine.

Israel has violated all the resolutions of the United Nations since 1947.

Israel is allowed to kill Palestinians and Arabs. It is allowed to confiscate more and more lands and it is allowed to violate the human rights of the Palestinians.

Israel is allowed to have weapons of mass destruction. It is allowed to pose a continuous threat to the Arabs in the name of Freedom and security.

Ibrahim Ebeid  
http://www.ozemail.com.au/~fouadeng.htm

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## Notes from the Levant

# 1997: A year of unfulfilled hopes for the Arab world

By Osama El-Sherif

THE YEAR is about to end. And it's time to take stock of what 1997 brought, took away and failed to deliver. On the whole, 1997 was a disappointing year for the Arab world.

Peace in the Middle East is still as elusive as it had been for decades. If anything, the Israelis have confirmed what the skeptics have been saying all along. The Likud-led government of Benjamin Netanyahu has stuck to its election promise to derail the Oslo accords and reverse the process of ceding land to the Palestinians. Land for peace has not proved to be a sound formula to end decades of Arab-Israeli conflict. Caught in the middle of all this is the American role which shifted from mediation, in Madrid, to outright bias in favor of Israel.

As the final days of this year give way to a new year, the Israeli government is still bogged down by internal differences on the size of land it promised to give back to the Palestinians. It had already succeeded in corrupting the Oslo agreements and is pushing now for a final settlement that enshrines the status quo. As it turns out, it cannot agree on specific percentages of land to give back, and the crux of the peace process has been transformed from a historic agreement to honor UN principles that would guarantee a just and lasting peace in the region, into a haggling process, an auction if you will, to give away few plots of isolated land.

It is a great disappointment for the Palestinians. More importantly, it is an upset for those who thought that peaceful co-existence between Arabs and Jews could soon take place in an area that has seen too many wars and bloodbaths.

This year has also failed to bring about inter-Arab reconciliation. The Gulf Crisis continues to cast its shadow over Arab relations more than seven years after Iraqi troops marched into neighboring Kuwait. The polarization and friction that occurred as a result of the 115-day campaign to evict the Iraqis from Kuwait lingers on. The machinery of the Arab League and Arab summits remains

crippled by Iraq's regional and international isolation. America's hegemony in the Gulf and Kuwait's refusal to normalize relations with the Arab countries who are accused of backing the Iraqi occupation.

Arab divisions and weaknesses have given rise to new regional alliances that are a threat to Arab national interests. The most serious of these alliances is the emerging Turkish-Israeli-US pact whose agenda could include anything from intimidating Syria to dividing Iraq to crippling Iran's military and economic recovery. The Arabs have condemned this military pact, but they have failed to formulate an answer to it. Meanwhile, Turkey and Israel move closer to each other, creating a sort of pincer to besiege Syria and Iraq.

Lack of strategic Arab coordination and Arab inability to come up with a united response, have contributed to prolonging and extending US sanctions against Iraq, Sudan and Libya. Arab diplomacy was nowhere to be seen in the international arena to end these unjustified forms of collective punishment that seems to only target the Arabs.

On the economic front, 1997 has not ushered in the much

talked about common Arab market. The Doha Economic Summit, understandably, fell prey to political frustrations with the Middle East peace process. Apart from that, no serious moves were initiated to facilitate trade and investments within the Arab region, nor were there any collective efforts to create a regional response to European, American and South Asian trade blocs. The Arab world continues to spend billions on arms and military hardware while the majority of its inhabitants are below the poverty line or are denied basic services such as clean water and adequate medical attention.

Militancy and fundamentalism have not subsided in 1997. In Algeria a dubious confrontation between the government and Muslim extremists has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of civilians—mostly innocent villagers. Butchery in the name of Islam has shocked the world recently when extremists massacred tens of foreign tourists in Luxor.

Lack of needed political reforms has denied many societies of social justice, pushing governments into confrontation with the opposition in a number of Arab countries. On the

other hand, Arab societies have been unable to come up with answers to deal with the challenges posed by the encroaching global culture, manifesting itself in what has come to be called the MTV culture. Drug addiction, among other social ailments, is now a serious problem in many Arab countries. Those affected are mainly young, western educated and well-to-do Arabs whose fascination with the global culture often comes at the expense of their frustration with their own local values.

The picture is not all that bad. There are visible achievements at country levels, whether in the political, economic or social spheres. Moreover, the recent summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tehran, pointed to important developments in the political and cultural languages that the people of this region are employing to create substantive dialogue with the rest of the world.

But if peace and an end to Arab differences were to take place in 1997, then both goals were not met. We can only hope that 1998 will be better. Millions of Arabs cherish both hopes.

## Remembering the Intifada

# Palestinian spirit continues to live on

By Cliff Kindy

THE INTIFADA, literally a shaking off (of the Israeli occupation), started in Jabalia Refugee Camp in Gaza Strip On December 9, 1987 when Palestinians reacted angrily to an Israeli truck hitting and killing 4 Palestinian workers returning from work in Israel. The stone throwing and strikes of Jabalia Camp spread like a wind-whipped prairie fire across the Strip and leaped even the fire break of Israel into the West Bank.

The fury of the intifada fueled the massive nonviolent resistance to the long-standing Israeli occupation. But images of stone throwers dominated the media rather than the brutal Israeli response to this Davidic action. Recognizing that the force of violence would only play into Israel's strong suit, Palestinians chose primarily to use the weapons of nonviolence. The world community, though, abandoned its responsibility in the nonviolent equation because of the dearth of news that was allowed out of the cordoned-off territories and because of apathy about a seemingly distant issue.

Nevertheless, the dramatic resistance of the small village of Beit Sahour brought the mighty Israeli state to the door of fear as the military occupation clamped a 40-day curfew on the town and went door-to-door destroying the economic infrastructure and trying to destroy the spirit of resistance in the people. The Israeli military feared that this unanimous tax resistance action undertaken by the people of Beit Sahour would spread like a virus across the Occupied Territories. The occupiers knew that there was no military defense against such a bold nonviolent action, a people who refused to pay for their own occupation.

The Intifada ended, but amazingly the spirit of nonviolent resistance springs eternal from the human soul. This is evidenced by the tidal wave of nonviolent movements sweeping the globe in such varied settings as the people power revolution in the Philippines, the fall of apartheid in South Africa, student protests against Sert dominance in Albania, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the brave democracy movement in China, and the recent nonviolent protests in Belgrade.

In Palestinian areas we see the nonviolent



spirit of the Intifada still alive. In Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, this summer, CPTers watched as a Palestinian soccer game provided the framework for the popular rejection of the takeover of more land by Israeli settlers. The Hebron Land Defence Committee informed CPT as, between Dura and Tarqumia, in the West Bank, 60 Palestinians marched to block the path of an Israeli contractor preparing to open a road into a proposed stone quarry for Israelis on confiscated Palestinian land.

This fall in the hills south of Yatta, 13 farm families returned to the land from which they had been evicted and where their cave homes had been bulldozed to clear the region for an Israeli military zone. The Palestinian families cleared the rubble and moved back in. CPTeam and a delegation will be joining them in rebuilding and solidarity.

This relentless Palestinian persistence is also visible in the renovation of 30 abandoned homes in the old city of Hebron as well as in the day-to-day living, this goes on in the schools, markets, farms, and offices and in the ongoing marriages, births, and deaths that frame

the existence of a people in an area where Israeli settlers and Israeli government policy plan for the removal of this "invisible" people from land that the Israeli people, nearly alone in all the world, see as their heritage, given by God.

As evidenced by history, the nonviolent resistance of the people living in their own area is stronger than the mightiest armies (see the Maya in Central America, India throwing off the British, South Africa under apartheid). The story of the Palestinian people is not ended but only about to continue as the nonviolent Intifada spirit becomes an implanted gene in the chromosomal chain of the Palestinian people.

The anniversary of the resistance is but a celebration of the ongoing Intifada. At this time it is incumbent on the concerned people of the world to assume their role in this resistance to injustice. The outcry of those of us seemingly unaffected by the struggle is an essential piece of the nonviolent campaign to make this world whole and nurture the best in each human soul.

MER

## Middle East

### Testing limits

THE ISLAMIC Summit in Tehran, distinctly sent a clear message to the world, that the Islamic "Umma" unconditionally rejects terror, and abhors the killings of the innocent. The message is not new, but it seems that it had to be reaffirmed at this large gathering of Muslim leaders to show that the fringe movements of extremism and violence do not have a monopoly over our faith, and cannot represent our beliefs.

This is the essence of the message that Jordan has always espoused, as carried by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, in his emphasis on tolerance from a strong position, and seeking justice from confidence in faith. Jordan's outlook has been clearly defined, and its position as a moderate Islamic and Arab country is firmly established in world affairs.

However, as our Crown Prince was outspoken in his demand for justice for the Iraqi people, the leadership of the fraternal Iraqi people, had already executed four of our Jordanian nationals in an act of barbarism, for a crime that falls under the category of ethical behavior rather than an act punishable by death. The contrast that emerged in front of the world, is that of a compassionate Hashemite leadership fighting to alleviate the injustices committed against Islamic peoples—the Iraqi people and another regional leadership that does not seem to be interested in the plight of its own people and determined to punish us for raising the issue of harsh realities affecting fellow Arab Muslims.

The Iraqi government statement, expressed surprise from our country's shock to the news of executions, disregarding the long history of solidarity between our two countries, which ironically, should have indicated clearly to the Iraqi leadership that we are not a state of terrorism and assassination, but live under pluralism, and compassion towards each other as well as towards fellow Muslim and Arab brothers.

It is hard for Jordanians to see the kind of treatment they get, for all the sufferings we had to endure just for the sake of our principles, and our commitment to the larger Islamic and Arab cause. Has the history of our Hashemite leadership, best of any nature other than sacrifice and forgiveness? And did the Iraqi leadership, throughout all those years of friendship and solidarity, miss that point altogether? Our collective leadership is shocked, and our people disappointed, as we are not used to this violence and do not see it as normal state of affairs.

The Iraqi penal system, if it exists, is not our own affair, but our citizens as Jordanian responsibility and their subjection to random violence is neither acceptable by our leadership nor by our people. At a time when the Islamic message of justice and fairness is carried out to the world, and at a time when the Iranian leadership released two of our nationals from their jails, whom carried up arms in the name of the Iraqi people, to comply with this eternal message, the Iraqi leadership chose to show that we cannot be merciful even towards each other.

All those efforts to uphold the principles of our faith, and the justice of our causes are tarnished in front of the whole of humanity which has been awaiting an unequivocal message, rejecting terror and extremism. It is clear, from the message of the Iraqi government that, at least in its violence, it will remain indiscriminate in terms of faith, race, or creed, and irrespective of concepts such as brother and foe.

Jordan is a self-respecting country, and the Jordanians are proud of their sense of belonging and identity. Our generosity and patience are our assets, and one hopes that they will not be tested.



## Business scene

■ Jordan Insurance Co has generated a JD 416,000 profit in the first half of its fiscal year starting from April to last July. The company's mid-annual statement showed that the net revenues of its insurance branches in Jordan reached JD 399,000, compared with JD 95,000 in the same time last year. It has branches in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Lebanon (agent). The company's total financial investments stood at JD 5.5 million. Its net revenues in the same period totalled JD 763,000.

■ The Government is going ahead in its strategy to sell 33 percent of its shares in the Jordan Cement Factories for a strategic partner. Within the few coming days, invitations will be sent to 12 global investment companies to choose a financial consultant who will be in charge of the selling procedure. Among invited institutions are the HSBC, the UBS, Myrill Linch, Barings and Flemings, and others.

■ The investments volume in new projects from last March till 7 December reached about JD 297 million, compared with JD 253 million in the same time last year, a growth of 17 percent. Foreign investments in these projects was JD 51 million, 17 percent of the total. The industrial sector took the lion's share at 57 percent, hotels at 35 percent; the remainder goes to agriculture, hospitals, marine transport and others.

■ In an attempt to offset the losses of the Ma'en Springs, the resort has been offered either for investment or rent, according to Mr Mohammad Batayneh, director of the Jordanian Investment Corp, an affiliate of the Finance Ministry. The Corporation, in charge of the Ma'en Springs, has not yet concluded contracts. Many are responding to the offer, among them is the Jordanian company, Mr Al Batayneh said that information about Israeli investors are groundless. But added that there are some French investors that are interested. The rent of the Springs is over 30 years or more.

■ Tourism revenues are expected to total JD 800 million for '97, according to Tourism Minister, Mr Aqel Bellajji. Tourism accounts for 37 percent of Jordanian exports and 11 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP). The minister added that by the year 2003, this sector will jump to first rank as a national industry.

## Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 17 December

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SPY	0.4801	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
LIT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

# Jordan's economy for '97 has followed steady progress Former CBJ Governor highlights need for more active reforms in economic sectors

By Ilham Sadeq  
Star Staff Writer

THE PERFORMANCE of Jordan's economy this year is given much more support, but with greater concern. Meanwhile, economic analysts describe it as moving on the right track.

Generally speaking, the image of the Jordanian economy is bright, however indications or signs of such brightness are quite clear and seem not to require the blessings of the International Monetary Fund and/or the World Bank.

Dr Mohammad Sa'ed Al Nabulsi, a former governor of the Central Bank of Jordan, tells *The Star* that the government has maintained stable monetary and financial stability, a high growth ratio and at the same time managed to create an attractive environment for foreign investments.

This is in addition to the reduction of the foreign debt burden and controlling the inflation rate. Such a strategy, he maintains, enabled the state to control the deficit in the national budget and balance of payments.

"The economy is picking up as deposits increase, the available size of liquidity in the banking sector is good, and many other sectors trading at the Amman Financial

Market are benefiting—if not, they are at least maintaining their position," Dr Al Nabulsi adds.

But such a performance does not mean that the negative aspects don't exist anymore.

Dr Al Nabulsi, who is now the President of the Trust House for Financial and Investment Consultancy, says also that the role played by the private sector in economic development certainly affects the performance of the financial market and reduces unemployment.

"Such a role should be given much concern, and its enhancement must be affected by more active government policies of financing through privatization and expansion of social security funding," he maintains.

Dr Al Nabulsi, who was a CBJ governor for 19 years, elaborates that the government is doing its best to achieve such a target, but these attempts have to be accelerated to raise the level of savings in the Kingdom.

Dr Al Nabulsi suggests that the pension measures at the Social Security Corp., must be reformed in a way that could reduce the burden on the state's offer and absorb unemployment.

"The pension and the social security sector should be partially privatized, by establishing special funds for pensions," Dr Nabulsi, who was a former economic minister, says, adding that the government is moving ahead in this regard, but the process must be speeded up.

As privatization was the strategy followed by the government to improve quality and save expenses, Al Nabulsi says "privatization could be a substantial remedy for some problems but it must not be applied to all sectors in the same manner."

Rather, it is a policy that has to be properly carried out and mainly targeted to those sectors that will benefit from such a process, or that face losses because they are run by the government.

The government's policy to liberalize prices has been criticized by some experts who see it as a way of increasing the burdens on the needy, rather than encourage competition.

In this respect, Dr Al Nabulsi argues that the liberalization of prices is an inevitable step, as international experience proved it to be the right way to enhance production, increase competition and improve quality.

He adds that those who suggest that the policy of fixing prices is the right way, are mistaken. He stresses that the best way is to increase income in order to face price hikes.

Asked about the contrast between the positive economic indications and the rise of unemployment, Dr Al Nabulsi says that "All efforts should be directed to eliminate unemployment by creating new job opportunities and encourage private sector enterprises."

However, some observers are still blaming high interest rates for the sluggishness in the economy.

They argue that this measure has encouraged people to deposit their money in a bank for a fixed revenue instead of establishing enterprises.

Defending the CBJ's strategy, Dr Al Nabulsi says, "I supported the Bank's policy to maintain high interest rates, but this was to achieve a target—to build a satisfactory foreign reserve, that is essential to maintain the dinar's value."

Now that such an objective has been fulfilled (the CBJ for-



Dr Al Nabulsi

ign reserve went up from \$500 million to \$1.6 billion), this policy is constantly under review by the Central Bank.

Dr Al Nabulsi, adds that the Central Bank today has realized this and started to reduce these rates.

Referring to the CBJ's instructions for banks to raise their capital to JD 20 million, Dr Al Nabulsi points out that it helps to build "a safety margin for bank depositors, however, it won't necessarily guarantee better profitability for shareholders."

Increasing the capital could

create big institutions that can lead to better banking services or performance, but continues to say that "merger will still be a demand to achieve high profitability in banking institutions."

Speaking about the latest Jordanian-EU Association Agreement signed in Brussels, Dr Al Nabulsi says "I personally think that the partnership issue requires detailed and extensive study to examine its negative and positive aspects."

## New investment company to be established at JD 20 million

AMMAN (Star)—Jordanian, Arab and foreign investors are currently preparing to establish the Jordan Investment Trust (Jord. Invest) company at a capital of JD 20 million (\$28.2 million). The new company will be declared during the first quarter of next year.

Referring to the objective behind its establishment, Dr Mohammad Sa'ed Al Nabulsi, who is the head of the founders committee, says that it is to attract Arab and foreign investments to Jordan.

Among the company's plans are to conduct studies, give consultation and arrange for co-operation between Jordanian capital and the capital of the Arab private sector.

The founding committee has, so far, attracted \$10.5 million from investors in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates,

Bahrain, Qatar, Lebanon and other foreign funds.

The biggest shareholder is the newly established Gulf International Investment Company (with a \$100 million capital) which paid about JD 2 million, 10 percent of the capital. Dr Al Nabulsi says that this company could increase its share to JD 3.5 million if other shareholders do not cover the rest of the capital.

The expected company plans to handle direct investments covering industry, mining and tourism besides investing its funds in either operating enterprises or other projects under execution.

Moreover, the company will allocate part of its financial resources for purchasing and holding shares in the Amman Financial Market. ■

## German venue at the Inter.Con

THE REPRESENTATIVE of the German Arab Chamber of Commerce and Munich, Fales in Amman is holding a special event at the Hotel Inter-Continental on 21 December at 5 pm. A presentation of the new Munich fairgrounds for the coming year will be given. Many of the fairs could be of interest to Jordanian companies and offer opportunities to further business relationships with Germany and the international community. ■

# Interdependent world shudders at Asian financial woes

By Steven Mufson

SEOUL, South Korea—Once the world would hardly have cared about the problems of Paul K. Yoo.

But in an increasingly interdependent world economy, the problems of people like the South Korean businessman have spooked Wall Street investors as well as Chinese leaders—and could end up hurting the fortunes of New Jersey and Connecticut equipment makers as well as Chinese textile workers.

Yoo runs two businesses, and both are ensnared in the financial crisis gripping this country.

One business serves as

South Korean sales agent for American makers of air filter equipment for hospital operating rooms. Because of the plunge in the South Korean currency, the won, customers in South Korea can no longer afford to buy the American equipment and Yoo has had no orders for two or three months, he said.

Yoo's other business is running four textile factories in China and one in Pyongyang, North Korea. That arm of his business is running into trouble because his usual South Korean bank does not have enough foreign exchange to lend Yoo the money to buy the Japanese and American cotton, wool and chemical

fibers he needs.

Yoo's predicament is a small slice of the South Korean crisis, but it points to why a financial crisis of confidence in this nation of 45 million has become a potentially destabilizing problem in the world. As trade grows and financial markets become swifter and more closely linked, the fortunes of a country like this are harder and harder to separate from the rest of the world.

"The world is tightly connected," said Rhee Changyong, assistant professor of economics at Seoul National University. "Previously it was linked by trading goods and services. At this moment it is

linked by a capital market that is very mobile, that is, no longer a lubricant but rather determines who survives and who does not."

At the moment, Asian countries once hailed as "tigers" are fighting for economic survival. At the Association of South East Asian Nations meeting in Kuala Lumpur next week, Asian leaders are expected to discuss measures they can take to stop the bloodshed in their stock and currency markets.

"Our problems are not only our own," said Rhee. "The Asian region is interconnected."

People also are realizing just how great an influence the rest of the world has on the economy here, and vice versa. Although the International Monetary Fund is committing \$57 billion to help smooth over Korea's financial problems, it is demanding an overhaul of Korea's economy that promises to be painful. This week, South Korea's financial woes contributed to a Wall

squeeze could hurt some neighbors, as banks tighten credit, companies cut spending and cash-strapped South Koreans reduce their travel plans. This year Koreans have made up about 6 percent of the tourists in Australia, which has revised downward next year's tourism forecast.

From the beginning of 1994 through the middle of this year, Korean companies invested \$2.6 billion in China, a pace that is unlikely to continue. More immediately, the shutting off of bank credit to Koreans could hurt companies and employees outside as well as inside Korea.

One example: About 2,000 workers depend on businessman Yoo's factories in China. In addition to having trouble scraping together money for raw materials, these factories also face a depressed South Korean market where they usually sell about half their goods.

China's economy also is showing signs of slowing down. Figures released this week show deflation setting in; retail prices dropped 0.8 percent in November compared with the year before. And while official growth figures suggest industrial output is zipping along at 11.6 percent, coal and crude oil production inched upward by less than 1 percent each.

Analysts say this pattern could put Asia into a downward spiral. While Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea have been driving Asia's cycle of financial crises, many say that continued growth and stable exchange rates in China and Japan are the most important elements for recovery. ■

## MARKET WATCH 13 - 16 December

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	
<div>↑ % 6.00 5.26 4.92</div> <div>↓ % 5.29 5.26 5.25</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TAJERCO</li><li>• Middle East Bank</li><li>• Mineral Hina</li><li>• Al Aqra Fwd</li><li>• International Fund</li><li>• JINCO</li></ul>	<div>↑ % 5.66 5.17 5.13</div> <div>↓ % 4.88 4.84 4.55</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TAJERCO</li><li>• Arab Pharm.</li><li>• Arab Paper Industry</li><li>• National Cable</li><li>• Jordan Investment Bank</li><li>• Arab Industry</li></ul>	<div>↑ % 6.67 4.65 4.08</div> <div>↓ % 5.00 4.85 4.88</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• JINCO</li><li>• National Industry</li><li>• Jordan Trade Center</li><li>• Middle East Bank</li><li>• General Mineral</li><li>• Middle East Hotel</li></ul>	<div>↑ % 6.25 5.88 5.56</div> <div>↓ % 3.33 5.10 5.00</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• JINCO</li><li>• Jordan Center</li><li>• Investment</li><li>• Ala-Dar Industry</li><li>• Tajirco</li><li>• Jordan Cement</li></ul>	
General Price Pointer	169.82	170.030	169.890	171.170
Trade Volume	2288236	742347	1854586	2163545
Stock Volume	756788	584858	1125542	1069669
Highest Traded Stocks	183560	195391	1274897	1282590
Arab Bank	Al Ahi Bank	Jordan Cement Factory	Jordan Cement Factory	

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

## Business Chronicle

### Pharmaceuticals hike, at what cost?

THE LATEST price increase of locally produced pharmaceuticals has created much discontent and even protest.

Though being a continuation of the government policy to liberalize prices of goods and services, such a hike has a humanitarian angle for it touches on the poor and needy patients. As approved by the Health Ministry, the rise in drugs' prices varies between 25 percent to 50 percent.

The Health Ministry has agreed to the increase because of demand from local manufacturers which see the increase as a way to offset their losses.

The pharmaceutical manufacturers claim that since 1989, they suffered great losses and faced hard times after the devaluation of the dinar. Also they stress that this increase will help them to cover the high costs of production.

These manufacturers see such demand as their right particularly after the government approved incentives for doctors and engineers.

The Pharmacists' Professional Association justifies this demand and says that such a step could help improve the standard and quality of local production and enhance the efficiency of this vital sector in the economy.

About 70 percent of the domestic pharmaceuticals is exported outside Jordan, this implies that such industrial branch provides Jordan with hard currency.

However, those who disapprove criticize the increase for what they claim as putting additional burdens on the needy. It's rare to find a family without a patient they argue, and under the new increases some of them would not be able to pay.

But, officials in the Health Ministry stress that the needy won't be affected as pharmaceuticals are available in the Ministry's pharmacies and at affordable price. However, one citizen argues that he was, many times, obliged to buy medicine (antibiotic or anti fever syrup) for his infants from private chemists because it is not available in health centers run by the Health Ministry.

Medicine is a basic need such as bread and water. The consumer used to prefer the locally produced to foreign medicines and hesitated in buying the latter because of the greater expense. However, today he will think twice before even thinking of buying locally produced drugs particularly when their price is similar or higher than the imported ones.

What makes the issue critical is that it was and is never associated with a rise or adjustment in people's income.

The normal procedure would go as follows: any rise in consumer commodity or service would be accompanied by a reciprocal salary increase to compensate for the difference in price.

Dr Mohammad Obeidat, president of the Jordan Consumer Protection Society protested the price increase of pharmaceuticals, and wondered whether it is up to the manufacturers to insist on meeting their demands, without giving any consideration to the consumer who is always the victim of price hikes.

He argues that the market of goods and services is in a chaotic state under the guise of the market economy. Dr Obeidat called on the Health Ministry to review its decision and nominate a specialized committee to study the matter carefully taking into consideration the real costs of local pharmaceuticals and the interests of citizens.

He suggests that a national committee must be formed to be in charge of evaluating the negative and positive aspects of the fluctuation of prices, besides exploring and finding out realistic mechanisms to create balance between fares and prices. Such a step could also help achieve justice among people and bridge the gap between the producer and the consumer.

Pharmacists, doctors, and engineers have their unions to call for their rights, and sometimes might arrange for demonstrations, strikes or sit-ins if their demands are not given concern or response from the decision makers.

But, who will call for the right of consumers and other ordinary workers who always remain ignored and marginalized, though they are the pillars of any productive enterprise or industry in society.

It is true that the approved hike of pharmaceuticals supports our national industry and boosts its productive capacity, but at what cost. ■



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# Iranian leader Khatemi calls for 'dialogue' with US

By John Lancaster

CAIRO, Egypt—Iranian President Mohammad Khatemi called earlier this week for a "thoughtful dialogue" with the American people in the most conciliatory remarks by an Iranian leader toward the United States since Islamic revolutionaries toppled the US-backed monarchy in 1979.

"I declare my respects to the great people of the United States and I hope that in the close future I would have a dialogue and talk with the people of America and I hope this will not take long," Khatemi said at a news conference in Tehran, Iran.

In Washington, a senior Clinton administration official involved in US policy toward Iran said, "We're ready to sit down with them face to face, government to government, if it's authoritative... If that's what he's talking about, it's a potentially positive statement."

The official said Khatemi's statements may be a response

to President Clinton's declaration last May that he was open to dialogue with Tehran after Khatemi, a moderate, was elected.

That call was reiterated last Tuesday by State Department deputy spokesman James Foley who renewed the US offer of "dialogue" and specified that it should "take place with an authorized representative of the government and that it be acknowledged publicly." A readiness for an "authoritative dialogue" with Iran has been the stated administration policy since 1994. Also US President Bill Clinton later cautiously welcomed the idea.

In some respects, Khatemi's remarks echoed previous Iranian statements to the effect that the Islamic republic has no quarrel with the American people, only with their government. He offered no specific formula for improving relations between Tehran and Washington, which severed diplomatic ties in 1980 over the taking of American hostages. He criticized

American politicians as "behind the times" and reiterated Iranian opposition to the US-sponsored Middle East peace process.

Nevertheless, Khatemi's conciliatory language marked a clear shift from the usual tenor of official Iranian rhetoric toward "the Great Satan." In that regard, it is consistent with his efforts to improve Iran's relations with the outside world—efforts that got a major boost last week when Khatemi hosted a summit in Tehran of leaders from Muslim countries, including such staunch US allies as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

"He's at the limit of the ballpark," a Western diplomat said by telephone from the Iranian capital. "I don't think it's a dramatic new emphasis, but it is a re-emphasis of the most positive formulation of their line. It's accentuating the positive rather than a new opening.... It shows they're still on a chum offensive."

Partly on the strength of his plea for greater openness to other cultures, Khatemi, 55,

won an upset victory last May over the candidate favored by religious hard-liners who dominate the Iranian political establishment. In response to a question during his news conference, the moderate Shiite Muslim cleric went out of his way to praise Americans and to emphasize his desire for better relations between the countries.

"At the appropriate time I will present my words to the American people," Khatemi said. "I would hope for a thoughtful dialogue with the American people and through this thoughtful dialogue we could get closer to peace and security and tranquility."

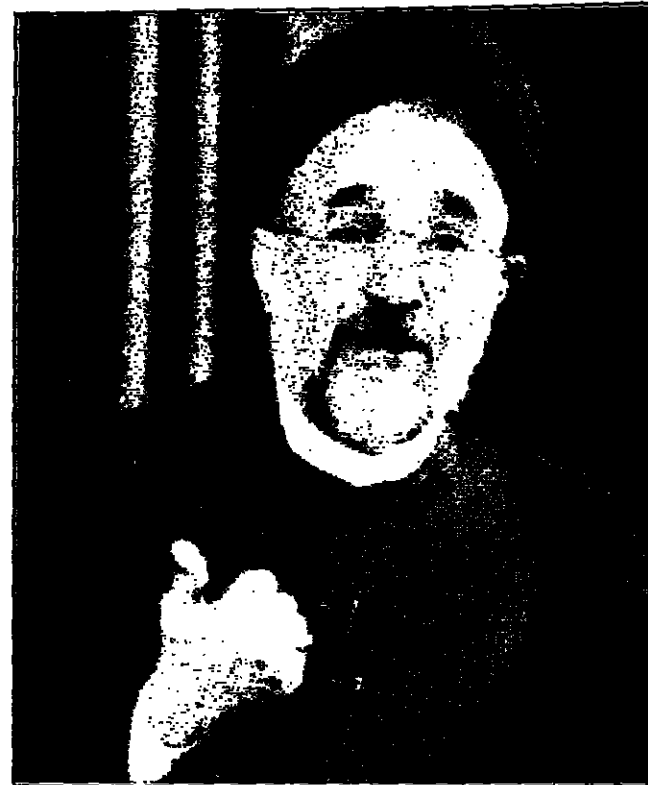
Khatemi offered little insight as to whether Iran's eagerness for dialogue with the United States extends to US political leaders. But he seemed to leave the door open to that possibility, observing that "the US government is, after all, the US government. It has been elected by the American people, and we respect that."

Any improvement in rela-

tions between the two governments is sure to come slowly. The United States accuses Iran of trying to wreck the Middle East peace process, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and sponsoring terrorism. Iran deeply resents the US military presence in the Arabian Gulf and has demanded the return of billions of dollars in Iranian assets frozen in US banks during the revolution.

In his comments, Khatemi did not shy from criticism of US political leaders, saying they had failed to come to grips with the realities of the post-Cold War world. "Something that pains me, and for which I pity the American people, is that their leaders have fallen behind the times," he said. "In a rapidly changing world...the United States still imagines that it is the sole power, and that it must impose its will on the whole world at any cost."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Khatemi

## Israelis Block Palestinian census in Jerusalem

By James Rupert

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—The Palestinian National Authority sought to count Palestinians living in East Jerusalem as part of a census last week, prompting the Israeli government to rush through a broadly worded ban on Palestinian activities in the disputed part of the city.

The dispute was the latest in a series in East Jerusalem that has been central to the breakdown of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The Clinton administration has been pressing both sides to revive the peacemaking process, with current efforts focusing on Israeli security concerns and Palestinian demands that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu carry out further West Bank withdrawals as agreed to by earlier Israeli governments.

Israel has insisted both halves of Jerusalem must be its unified capital ever since it captured the eastern part of the city from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East War. But Palestinians have declared the historically Arab-run eastern neighborhood—which includes the walled Old City and its numerous sites sacred to three religions—must be the capital of the state they have vowed to create in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian National Authority, which under Yasser Arafat administers territory already ceded by Israel, ordered a census of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as a step toward the formation of that state. But Israeli police fanned out in East Jerusalem to stop census-takers, who were to go from house to house with questionnaires. Israeli television reported that police arrested a Palestinian woman for census-taking.

After Israeli officials said they had no law to prohibit the census, the government scrambled to get the Knesset, or parliament, to pass one. Lawmakers waived a Knesset rule to permit the law's passage in a single day.

The bill "widens the authority to prevent all activities of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) or of the PNA inconsistent with the sovereignty of the state of Israel," a Justice Ministry statement said—and Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi specified the law could be applied to actions besides the census.

Palestinians and Israelis regularly accuse each other of trying to establish precedents aimed at influencing final negotiations on the city's status. The peace process broke down this year largely over such an issue, when Israel began building a new Jewish neighborhood in a traditional Palestinian area that would help encircle the Arab neighborhoods with Jewish suburbs.

No census of Palestinians has been done in years. About 180,000 Palestinians are estimated to live in East Jerusalem, and a detailed survey of them could be used to strengthen the Palestinians' hand in discussions on the city's status.

Palestinian census director Hassan Abu Libdeh said the survey—which includes dozens of questions on housing conditions, health and economic status of Palestinian families—would help the authority in its planning and let Palestinians "present themselves in a much better way as a nation."

"We are against any move by the Palestinian National Authority that is undermining Israel's authority in its capital city," said Hanegbi. "It's not their place, they don't have any authority to do anything in Jerusalem, and they better stop it before we move in."

Netanyahu called the proposed census a "gross violation" of the 1993 Oslo accord between the two sides. That accord specified the Palestinian Authority's jurisdiction "will not apply to Jerusalem."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Lurie's NewsCartoon



Here... I brought you a friend to play with.  
(Drawn from: Israeli media reports that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is considering pulling back from 6 to 8 percent of the West Bank, an amount that American officials stress is not "credible or meaningful.")

## Israel in consternation over Farrakhan visit

By James Rupert

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan surprised Israel Sunday by arriving for a visit—and again Monday by ending it, after canceling a planned stop in Jerusalem. He came back to Jordan, Monday for a several day visit to be followed by his trip to Egypt.

Farrakhan is making a global tour whose itinerary includes Israel, as well as

nations hostile to the United States. Last week he visited Iraq, where he criticized US-backed economic sanctions for making "the Iraqi people suffer." Farrakhan has announced stops in Libya and Iran, as well as China, North Korea and Cuba. US officials have criticized the tour as "unhelpful."

Some weeks ago, Farrakhan asked Israel, through its embassy in Washington, to arrange meetings for him in January with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Israeli officials said.

The proposal ignited debate here because of Farrakhan's periodic denunciations of Judaism and Jews, and for what Jewish leaders say are



Farrakhan with PNA President Arafat in Gaza, Sunday

antisemitic publications and statements by the Nation of Islam.

In recent years, notably as he organized the 1995 Million

Man March on Washington, Farrakhan has called for dialogue between blacks and Jews. But he "has shown no repentance, nor any willingness to stop his hatred," wrote Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in the daily Haaretz newspaper last week.

Israel had not responded to Farrakhan's request, said David Bar-Ilan, Netanyahu's spokesman and adviser. "We didn't think there was any hurry, since he said January," he said.

But on Sunday, Farrakhan and an entourage of about 50 arrived at the Israeli-controlled border point on the Allenby Bridge, between Jordan and the West Bank. He was admitted, as US passport holders generally are, then was escorted by an official of the Palestinian National Authority.

"When we found out he had come, the Foreign Ministry hurried to convene some people and decided that there would be no official contact with Farrakhan," Bar-Ilan said.

Farrakhan's group drove by bus across the West Bank and Israel to the Gaza Strip, where Farrakhan met Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat night. Arafat declared, "We are very happy...to meet our brother in our land."

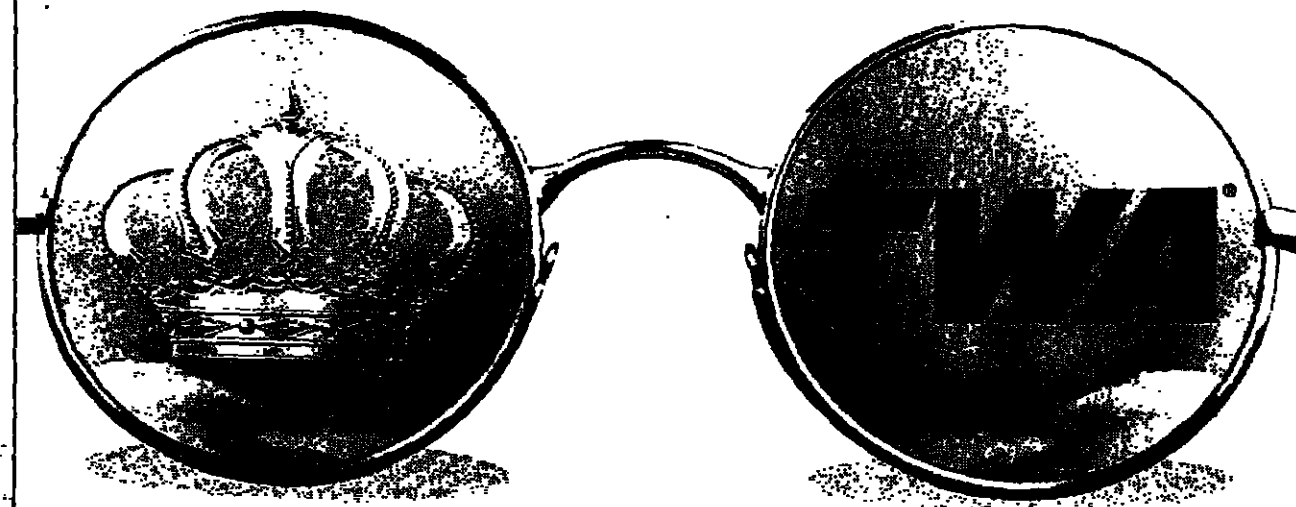
Farrakhan voiced support for the Palestinian struggle for statehood, and told Israeli reporters "I have been critical of some aspects of Jewish behavior toward black people," but "I have never been antisemitic."

Farrakhan had said he would visit the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's most revered shrines, in Jerusalem. Instead, he drove to Jordan, saying he canceled the Jerusalem visit after learning of a planned protest.

"We don't get a favorable sign from the government that I am welcome and no pledge of security for us," he said as he prepared to leave.

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By James Kupert

# As Pinochet retires, Chile is divided over his legacy

By Anthony Faiola

SANTIAGO, Chile—Before a national television audience recently, the aging ex-dictator was moved to tears. It was his last birthday celebration in uniform before military retirement. The right-wing elite lauded him as "our national father" and Gen. Augusto Pinochet, Chile's former iron-fisted ruler, wept over the adoring kisses of a young woman.

In her living room, meanwhile, the solitary figure of Sola Sierra, 70, watched the celebration with a photo of her husband, one of thousands of Chileans spirited away by Pinochet's men in the 1970s and 1980s, never to be heard from again. "It causes me such pain when they do that—when they make him out to be a hero," Sierra said. "That man has the blood of Chile on his hands."

After 25 years as commander in chief of the Chilean army, including 17 as self-imposed ruler during which political dissent was crushed, Pinochet, at 82, is being compelled by law to retire and could leave office as early as January. In the waning days of the barrel-chested general, seen by many as the last great dinosaur of South America's age of military domination, Pinochet's legacy is being hotly debated inside and outside Chile as never before.

Pinochet supporters portray him as the savior of a nation transformed into an economic juggernaut—so financially sound that it has been dubbed the "South American Switzerland." But while Pinochet may have charted a sure economic course, many say the psychological damage done to this Andean nation during his grip on power outweighed the benefits, which came mainly to the upper classes in any case.

A government poll recently showed more than 70 percent of Chileans will remember him primarily not as an economic savior but as a military dictator. Despite the passage of time, relatives of victims of his harsh rule continue to push for investigations and to search for mass graves in a quest to lay to rest the memories of their loved ones.

"He will go down in history as the man who (seized) one of the most democratic nations" in the hemisphere, said Jose Joaquin Brunner, secretary general in President Eduardo Frei's Cabinet.

Once Pinochet hangs up his general's uniform, he will put on



General AUGUSTO PINOCHET, Chile's Military Strongman

a civilian suit and begin serving as Chile's only "senator for life," a job he ensured himself before relinquishing presidential power in 1990. But in a decade that has brought a profound regional shift toward democracy, his military retirement is nevertheless being viewed as the passing of an era, not only for Chile but for all Latin America.

"Latin America and Chile have had to deal with a gross distortion of military power in our past," said Enrique Correa Rios, a former cabinet secretary general. "The end of Pinochet's military career is symbolically a mark in time for all of us."

Pinochet, a consummate military personality always suspicious of career politicians, is said to consider Napoleon and the Prussian generals of old Germany as role models and heroes. Here in Chile, he was a dictator who defied the odds. As justas fell, he, like Spain's Francisco Franco, held on to his military fiefdom, surrounding himself with reverent devotees who continue to defend, ignore or deny the methods used during his reign.

Pinochet, who by many

accounts still fancied himself a darling of the public even after an attempt on his life and violent protests by hundreds of thousands of Chileans, permitted a transfer of power to an elected government after voters, in a 1988 plebiscite, rejected his continued rule. Shocked and wounded by the vote, the graying general, who now uses a hearing aid and walks slowly, still kept hawkish watch as army chief.

Through the "designated senators" in Chile's upper house, who are picked by the military and other public institutions, he can block changes he finds distasteful, including attempts to investigate crimes committed during his dictatorship.

During the past seven years, however, democracy has begun taking root again. One of the first acts of the new civilian government, for instance, was the reopening of the famous gates to La Moneda, the Chilean presidential palace closed since Pinochet bombed it during his 1973 coup against President Salvador Allende, a democratically elected Marxist.

Gone are the days of severe

press censorship and of Chileans' fear of late-night military inspections and arrests. When he assumes his new role in the Senate, Pinochet will find himself in the same building as officials he once blacklisted. Theoretically, he may even serve on subcommittees with Isabel Allende, the deposed president's daughter and now a congresswoman.

But echoes of the old days persist. The military maintains the right to censor television and movies. And only last year, Pinochet had Communist Party President Gladys Marin arrested and jailed for publicly calling him a "psychopath and blackmailer."

"Anyone who thinks Pinochet still doesn't have enormous power in Chile is fooling themselves," said Congressman Juan Pablo Letelier, whose father, former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier, was assassinated in Washington in 1976 by Pinochet's secret police. "He's going to hold on to it, too. I don't think this country will ever have peace from this man until he's dead."

Many Chileans are still uncomfortable with publicly discussing the general, but his retirement is forcing the reluctant nation to face its past. Pinochet's name is being bandied about with startling frequency lately, considering the tendency of his critics to land in jail.

The far left, which recently won overwhelming victories in student elections at Chilean universities, is running highly charged political ads on national TV for the elections. In a reference to a military still powerful in national politics, the ads mockingly show bureaucrats shining the shoes of an army commander, with the slogan "No More of the Same."

Many Chileans, even those who don't support the general, reject such public criticisms, seeing them as reminders of a period they would rather forget. "Pinochet is like the dark, locked door in the house," a Chilean journalist said. "Everybody knows what's inside, but nobody wants to open it again. We want to look forward now, not back."

That door was built in 1973, when Pinochet launched a bloody military coup that successfully ousted Allende, who had divided the nation with his efforts at widespread nationalization of industry. Pinochet—the last among the military hierarchy to agree to the coup, according to many accounts—orchestrated the assault against La Moneda, leaving the building and the nation in tatters. He and his supporters

called the coup necessary to prevent a civil war, but it ended Chile's history as one of Latin America's most democratic societies, where congressmen once bowed to one another and discussed even the most heated issues as gentlemen.

In his war against leftists, Pinochet, his military and his notorious secret police, known as the DINA, launched an era of political repression during which an estimated 3,000 citizens "disappeared." Even today, he is among those being tried in absentia by a Spanish court for human-rights abuses committed by Latin dictators.

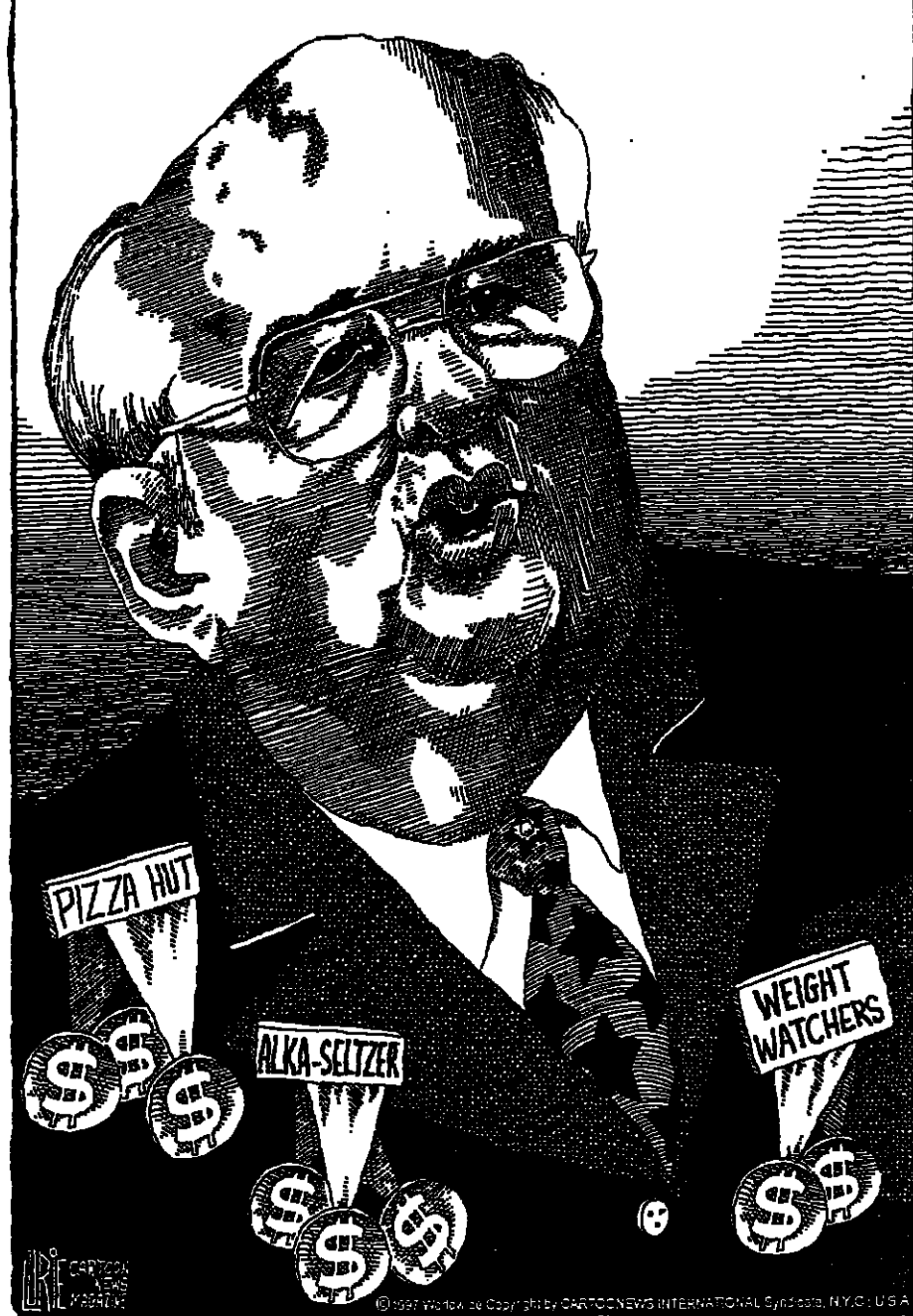
His supporters insist Pinochet did "what had to be done." We were at war," retired Gen. Alejandro Medina Loiz, a former Pinochet aide, said in an interview. "You think the leftists were pure? Do you think they were innocent? They tried to assassinate him. They were communists getting help from the Russians and the Cubans. These were tough people we were fighting."

Medina and other loyalists credit Pinochet with turning this nation of 14 million into the region's financial Wunderkind. Only 30 of the 300 formerly state-owned industries have yet to be privatized. Chile, with the longest sustained growth rate in Latin America, has welcomed, and received, foreign investment. "When you look at the result, I think you have to admit that Pinochet knew what was best for Chile," said Hernan Gutierrez, a Santiago businessman and board member of the Pinochet Foundation.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Lurie's NewsCartoon

X46 Dec. 4, 97



Hero of the U.S.S.R.

(News Item: M. Gorbachev, the last leader of the U.S.S.R., filmed a commercial for "Pizza Hut" for \$1 million. He claimed he badly needed the money to finance his foundation.)

## Imelda Marcos is still a thrill in Manila

By David Lamb

MANILA, Philippines—For a convicted felon facing 24 years in prison, Imelda Marcos seemed to have not a care in the world. Dressed like a queen, as effervescent as champagne, she laughed and chatted and hardly even noticed that her recreational vehicle had come to a dead standstill in Manila's numbing traffic.

At a worktable in the RV this week, she sketched a map of the world, making a point about global power shifts. She spoke about losing Vietnam to the Communists, her concern over China's growing influence—"the Chinese will boil you in your own fat," she says—and her admiration for former President Nixon. Her conversation was sprinkled with such phrases as, "As I told Chairman Mao" or "I remember Churchill saying," as well as biblical references and homilies about love and beauty.

Imelda Marcos, the widow of Ferdinand E. Marcos, who ruled here for 21 years, is 68 now, tall, elegant, outlandish and still a celebrity. Though her name has been sullied, her fortune confiscated and her freedom gained only after posting bail, the irrepressible Marcos is convinced that rehabilitation and vindication are within reach. If only people would embrace the same history she does.

The world may remember her primarily as the woman with a lavish lifestyle and with 1,200 pairs of shoes, but to Filipinos, she is still the bejeweled, impeccably coiffured lady with waist-length jet-black hair and star qualities that you can love or hate but not ignore.

She mesmerized the US Embassy's Fourth of July party by singing the American and Philippine national anthems. And when she walked unannounced into a New Orleans restaurant, the

American owner, Murray Hertz, recalled: "Conversation just stopped. It was like a movie star had come in."

"She asked for a mike and started singing. She had everyone spellbound, because this was Imelda Marcos. She has tremendous charisma. And I think the Filipinos, who are forgiving people anyway, have a hard time staying mad at someone like that."

Finally clear of traffic, her RV pulled up to Congress, and Marcos, an elected member of the lower house from distant Leyte island, alighted to the cheers of a hundred supporters. She acted taken aback, surprised, then delighted by an unexpected show of affection.

Schoolchildren gathered around and serenaded her with Christmas carols. Marcos, who suffers from irreversible glaucoma, removed her dark glasses and dabbed at a tear. The crowd grew. Not to worry, she said. She had Christmas presents for everyone. She motioned the crowd to follow her onto the street where three trailer trucks were parked, loaded with 10-pound bags of rice bearing the words, "Merry Christmas, Imelda."

In 1976, a friend, Sol Vanzil, read Marcos' palm, and F.L.—as she was then known, for first lady—had three questions: Will I ever be poor again? Will I die violently? Will my family and I be able to stay together forever in the Philippines? Ten years later, Ferdinand Marcos and his wife of 32 years fled to Hawaii in a "People Power" revolution that brought Corason Aquino to the presidency. Aquino's first executive order was to set up a commission to track down and reclaim the billions of dollars Ferdinand and Imelda are said to have stolen while in office, he as president, she as an unelected quasi chief executive.

Ferdinand Marcos died in

Hawaii in 1989. After a long legal battle, Imelda Marcos was allowed to return to the Philippines in 1991. By then the Marcoses' 11 homes had been emptied of priceless art and silver collections, which were sold at auction. Several pieces, including a Picasso, were said to have been smuggled back to Imelda Marcos by former staffers who camouflaged them in fruit baskets.

In 1993, Marcos was convicted of graft, in a relatively minor business transaction in which the court said she did not benefit personally. She is free on \$3,000 bail while appealing the conviction, and has received permission from the Supreme Court here to leave the country for the first time since 1993 in order to get treatment for her eye ailment in Boston.

Marcos said claims against the family estate now stand at \$70 billion. Still unresolved are the whereabouts and ownership of more than five tons of gold.

"Simple arithmetic tells you the allegations are ludicrous," said the former first lady, who always refers to her husband by his last name. "Marcos' total budget for all his years as president was 70 billion pesos (\$2 billion at current exchange rates). You mean he stole every cent and still built thousands of miles of roads, power plants and all he accomplished? Add up the numbers. Something is wrong."

Indeed, history has the whole 21 years wrong, she believes. Marcos wasn't a dictator but one of the world's great democrats. He wasn't a thief; he was an astute trader in precious metals who started buying gold when it sold for \$32 an ounce. He declared martial law not to perpetuate his own rule but to prevent the Philippines from slipping into political instability, lawlessness and economic ruin. As

for her role, she had none, other than as loving supporter.

Imelda Marcos, who gives her \$370-a-month congressional salary to charity, says she is broke and living on the generosity of friends. "They've been wonderful," she said. "Doris Duke (the late tobacco heiress) gave \$5 million to bail me out and \$10 million to pay my lawyers' bills. 'Clearly, whoever is footing the bills has deep pockets, and Mrs. Marcos lives in a style befitting a millionaire, though perhaps no longer that of a billionaire.'"

Half a dozen staffers, including a nurse/hairdresser, see to her needs and keep her legal documents in order. On the grand piano in her apartment are photographs of the Marcoses with world leaders such as former President Reagan, and on the coffee table are stacked books on the Marcos legacy, one of whose authors is identified as a "dissident cousin."

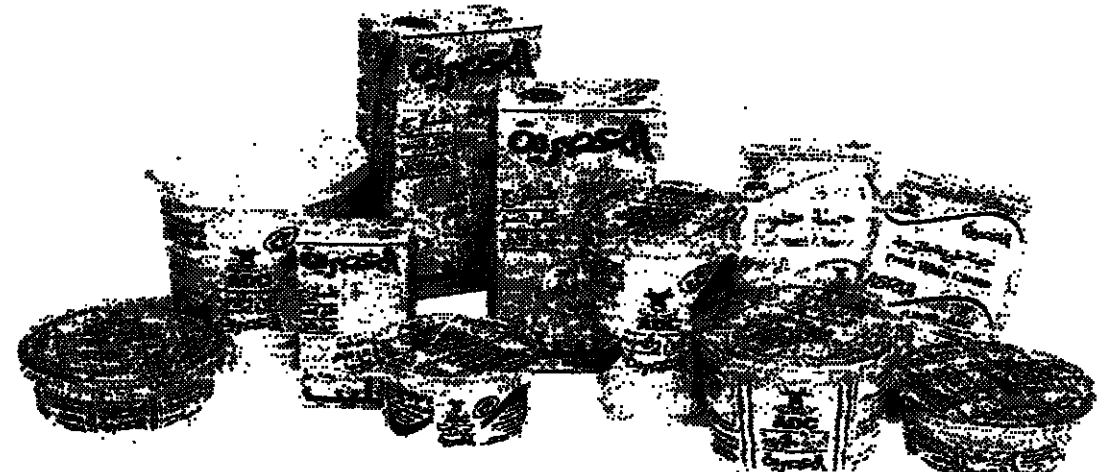
"A terrible book," Marcos said. "Very unfair. But that's all right. I'm used to that." Next to the door were two suitcases. Marcos was preparing to wing her way to the United States for a two-week stay. On her itinerary were doctors' appointments in Boston, meetings to discuss her legal wrangles and a stop in Washington to see friends from the times when the world knew no more powerful and wealthy couple than Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos.

"I may be seeing the president," she said casually, although an US diplomat here said that wasn't in the cards.

An outsider she may now be, but she gave no hint of understanding that anything had changed from the old days.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

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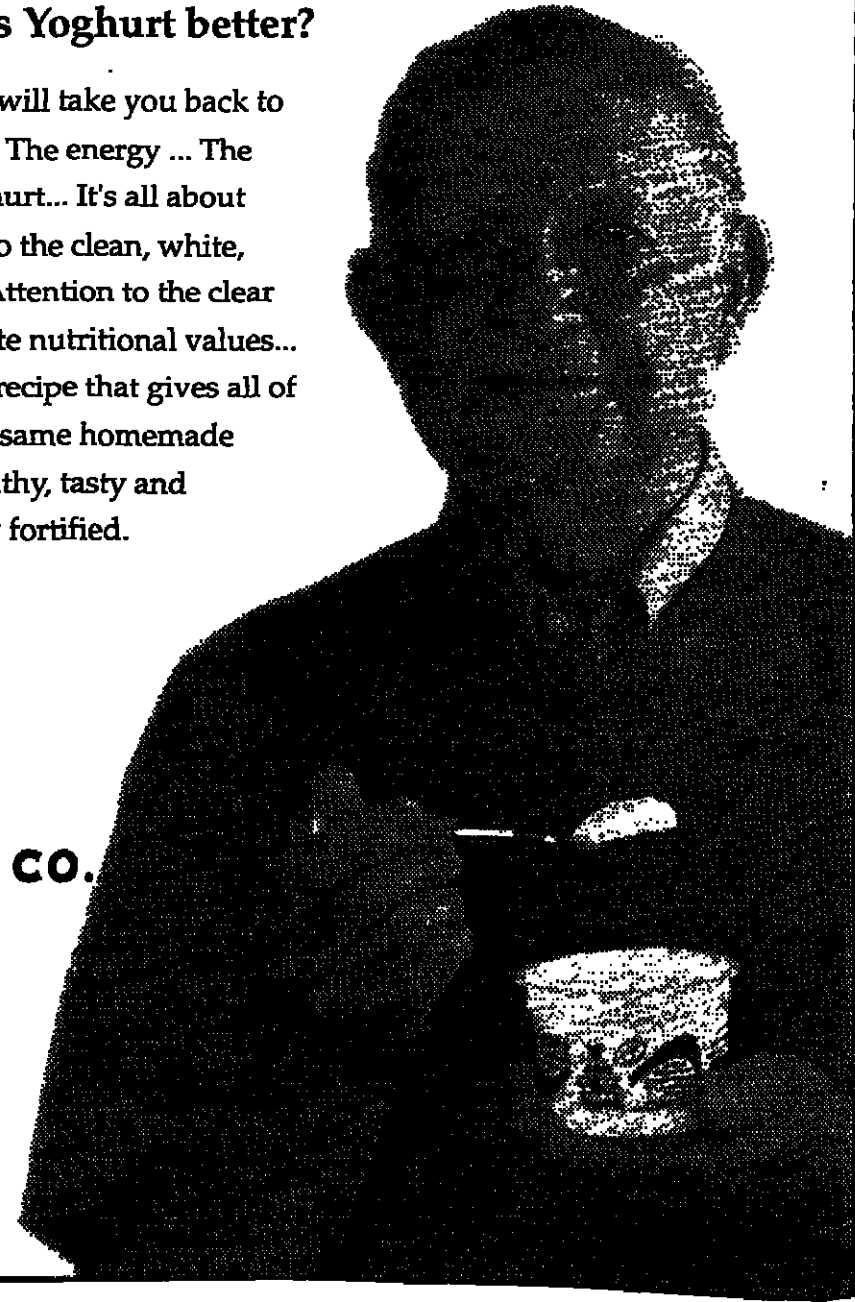
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# Le Jourdain

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Partis politiques et syndicats

## Restrictions en vue

Chaud devant. Au menu de l'actuelle session parlementaire, des sujets qui fâchent. Le gouvernement veut amender les lois sur les partis politiques et les associations professionnelles qui craignent le pire.

Certains partis ont déjà prévenu : si le gouvernement poursuit sur la voie des amendements restrictifs, ils entraineront en clandestinité. Les rumeurs vont bon train dans les couloirs parlementaires et les offices politiques. Selon les rumeurs en cours, un parti devrait compter au moins 200 membres (certains parlent de 500) pour être autorisé, au lieu des 50 actuels. Par ailleurs, le ministre de l'Intérieur aurait plus de prérogatives et renforcerait son contrôle sur les finances des partis ainsi que sur leur organisation.

Enfin, un groupe politique qui n'aurait aucun représentant à la Chambre des députés après deux élections législatives consécutives pourrait être dissous. Il lui faudrait alors à nouveau reprendre la longue procédure d'enregistrement.

Quant aux associations professionnelles (médecins, avocats, ingénieurs...), le gouvernement aurait l'intention de transformer l'adhésion obligatoire en volontaire. Il table ainsi sur une réduction spectaculaire du nombre de membres, ce qui affaiblirait la représentation et de la leur rôle politique très actif des associations dans la vie du pays. Surtout, le projet de loi prévoit la désignation

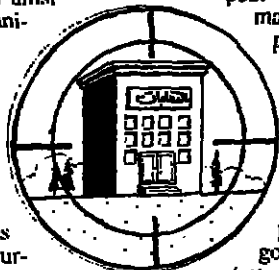
d'un représentant du gouvernement afin de superviser les activités de chaque association ! L'affaiblissement des associations professionnelles est un vieux serpent de mer. Sous différentes formes et divers prétextes, on en parle depuis 1987. Les gouvernements successifs ont toujours été gênés de l'influence politique de ces syndicats dans l'opinion publique jordanienne.

Le Premier ministre actuel vient d'obtenir la confiance des parlementaires et son cabinet peut compter sur une majorité confortable pour faire passer ses amendements.

Evidemment, les partis politiques ne l'entendent pas de cette oreille. Ils ont formé un comité de suivi pour marquer le gouvernement à la cuillère et les associations professionnelles se préparent à défendre leurs acquis obtenus ces trois dernières décennies. Comme le suggère le dessin, tire du quotidien Arab el-Yom, elles refusent de devenir des cibles trop faciles.

La semaine dernière, l'association jordanienne des droits de l'homme appelait le Parlement à ne pas approuver les amendements du gouvernement « afin de sauver le processus démocratique ».

Suleiman Sweiss



Relations jordano-irakiennes

## Des Jordaniens exécutés pour rien ?

Justifiées ou non, les raisons de l'attitude irakienne sont loin d'être éclaircies. En tout cas, les deux pays « frères » ne sont pas prêts à sacrifier leurs intérêts communs.

Rarement une position du gouvernement jordanien a eu ces derniers temps un écho populaire aussi favorable que l'exécution de quatre Jordaniens en Irak. Mis à part quelques partis et organisations connus pour leur soutien inconditionnel au régime irakien, la plupart des forces politiques et syndicales, ainsi que de nombreuses personnalités parlementaires - sans oublier la presse - ont dénoncé vigoureusement les peines infligées aux quatre malheureux : la mort pour un trafic de pièces détachées d'un montant de 620 JD !

Malgré les sentiments de colère et de tristesse qui ont envahi les Jordaniens, ceux-ci restent pourtant persuadés que les efforts pour sauver le peuple irakien de l'embargo et maintenir de bonnes relations doivent continuer. Autrement dit, la raison d'Etat prévaut. Bien sûr, le gouvernement a fait entendre son mécontentement mais il a préféré des représailles modérées : seuls sept membres (sur 15) de l'ambassade d'Irak à Amman ont été expulsés. Leur sélection a même été laissée à l'appréciation des autorités irakiennes.

Malgré l'exécution dans la semaine d'un cinquième Jordannien accusé de meurtre (confir-

mée par le frère de la victime mais démentie par l'ambassade d'Irak à Amman), il semble que les deux pays cherchent à minimiser la crise. Les intérêts de chacun doivent être préservés. Le porte-parole du ministère irakien de l'information n'a-t-il pas déclaré que Bagdad n'avait pas l'intention de stopper la fourniture de pétrole au royaume hashémite ? La Jordanie, quant à elle, dépend plus que jamais de cette richesse voisine avec 70.000 barils qui lui sont vendus chaque jour à un tarif préfé-

rentiel.

Par ailleurs, le tapage médiatique ne suffit pas à faire taire toutes les questions, notamment à l'égard de la responsabilité du gouvernement jordanien. L'affaire n'est pas récente. Les Jordaniens exécutés ont d'abord été arrêtés le 6 janvier dernier.

Ils ont ensuite été libérés avant d'être à nouveau mis sous les verrous le 6 avril. Leur procès a été reporté jusqu'au 4 octobre et peu après les verdicts ont été publiés. L'hebdomadaire jordanien Shihane s'en était même fait l'écho dans son édition du 25 octobre.

Qu'a fait le gouvernement jordanien pendant tout ce

temps ? N'aurait-il pu réagir plus tôt ? De source gouvernementale, des contacts entre les autorités des deux pays ont pourtant été établis le 6 et le 20 octobre, sans succès. Par ailleurs, les Jordaniens n'ont pas profité, semble-t-il, des nombreux passages par Amman du vice-premier ministre irakien Tarek Aziz au moment de la crise Onu-Irak. Les dirigeants jordaniens n'ont-ils pas cru à l'application de la peine ? Une semaine avant, selon le témoignage de la veuve d'une des victimes (voir encadré), la sentence était annulée par les Irakiens.

Au bout du compte, cette af-

faire demeure opaque. Pour le président irakien, il ne s'agit que d'une « erreur », commise sans en mesurer les conséquences. Réponse à combien insatisfaisante. Certains observateurs parlent d'avertissement aux trafiquants qui sévissent en nombre en Irak. Saddam Hussein et son proche entourage voudraient garder le contrôle d'un marché noir dont ils ont su tirer profit depuis le début de l'embargo. A l'heure qu'il est, les trafics se poursuivent à la frontière jordanienne.

Suleiman Sweiss

Nahed Al-Khloof

pour gagner sa vie. Il était décorateur jusqu'en 95 quand il a décidé de se lancer dans le commerce, pour gagner plus d'argent. En Jordanie ou en Irak, il achetait des pièces détachées de voiture, des vêtements et des desserts pour les revendre ensuite. En janvier 1997, il transportait des pièces détachées vers la Jordanie quand il a été arrêté avec trois autres personnes à la frontière. Ils ont été libérés deux mois plus tard après avoir payé 1,4 millions de dinars irakiens (environ 2240 JD). Après 20 jours, ils étaient de nouveau arrêtés et le 4 octobre ils étaient condamnés à mort.

Quoi qu'il ait pu faire, Walid, le N'Seirat, une famille d'Irbid plutôt aisée, ne s'expliquent pas le geste de l'Irak. Même s'ils admettent que les activités de leur parent n'étaient pas des plus honnêtes, ils assurent que cela ne valait pas cette peine de mort, deux ou trois ans d'emprisonnement tout au plus.

A quelques kilomètres au sud d'Irbid est entré le cadavre de Walid dans le petit village de Nafth. Là-bas, il y avait une petite maison blanche dont les pièces sont à moitié meublées. Zohour et Walid venaient bientôt s'y installer.

Nahed Al-Khloof

Nahed Al-Khloof

Nahed Al-Khloof

Lors des funérailles d'un des Jordaniens exécutés. Le roi Hussein a qualifié le geste irakien de « crime atroce ».

Suleiman Sweiss

Nahed Al-Khloof

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## Nouvelles du Pays

Gestion déléguée des services publics

## Les Français parlent d'expérience

Une mission française conduite par le maire d'une grande ville de la banlieue parisienne, était cette semaine à Amman. Pendant deux jours, ils ont essayé de convaincre les Jordaniens des qualités du partenariat public/privé dans les services urbains.

## Ton maire dans un camp !

« Nous ne demandons rien de tout. Nous voulons seulement revenir en Palestine pour vivre dans notre pays natal. Une vieille femme est en colère au milieu d'une petite pièce sale et sans lumière. Elle porte un costume traditionnel palestinien : une robe noire brodée de rouge et un voile blanc. Devant elle, dans leurs imperméables, l'ambassadeur de France Bernard Baisinger et le maire communiste de Bobigny, Bernard Birsinger, l'écouter attentivement. M. le maire (au centre de la photo), en « visite touristique » dans le camp palestinien de Baqaa ? Pas tout à fait. Sur proposition de l'ambassade de France, Bernard Birsinger, en marge du séminaire sur le partenariat public/privé (voir ci-contre), a souhaité connaître les conditions dans lesquelles vivaient les populations palestiniennes de Jordanie : « Il n'est difficile de venir en Jordanie sans visiter l'un des camps, assure-t-il, je crains en l'existence de la Palestine, de son peuple. Les gens doivent pouvoir revenir dans leur pays ».

Après les rencontres officielles (le représentant de l'UNRWA et celui du département jordanien des affaires palestiniennes), les deux Bernard sont entrés dans le vif du sujet. Des écoles tout d'abord. Dans chaque salle de classe, les enfants accueillent ces deux messieurs par un *aloum wasahlan* retentissant. On prend quelques photographies. Les élèves rigolent pas mal. Mais leur joie de découvrir ces visiteurs improvisés ne masque pas leurs difficultés : manque de livres, pas de jeux éducatifs, pas d'eau et surtout pas de chauffage.

Le palais à ciel ouvert

Quelques centaines de mètres plus loin, dans une clinique, les effets de ces carences sont directement palpables : chaque jour,

près de 700 enfants viennent soigner leur grippe. Une véritable épidémie. Bernard Birsinger pose des questions. L'air grave derrière sa grosse moustache et les mains dans les poches. Bernard Baisinger, arabisophone aguerri, traduit. Tout le long du parcours, des routes boueuses, mélange de pluie et de crasse, des gens se joignent au cortège de ces personnalités. Ils demandent : « Qui sont-ils ? » et une fois la réponse obtenue, s'arrêtent : « Alléluia nous aide. On mène une vie de galère... ». Ce n'est pas souvent que les Palestiniens de Baqaa reçoivent la visite d'étrangers.

Pourtant, la majorité des équipements du camp sont financés par les donateurs internationaux : ici, une école équipée par la Chine, une autre par le Japon, là, un centre spécialisé aidé par l'Australie... Dans ce paysage varié, également député de Seine-Saint-Denis, admet que « la participation française dans le financement de l'UNRWA est faible par rapport à l'action politique générale de notre gouvernement dans le monde ». En tout cas, il n'est pas reparti les mains vides. Une responsabilité d'une des écoles lui a remis un joli tissu décoratif. En échange, il a offert à ses guides d'une matinée une estampe de Paris et un livre sur Bobigny, communication oblige !

Le député-maire Bernard Birsinger promet de parler des réfugiés au gouvernement à son retour en France : « Il faut réfléchir au projet d'une école telle qu'elle est équipée par les Chinois ou les Japonais ». Mais dans sa ville en proie aux difficultés d'une banlieue parisienne, aura-t-il le temps de penser encore au « palais » de Baqaa, cette magnifique bicoque de quatre pièces séparées d'un couloir à ciel ouvert ?

Nahed Al-Khloof

### Le maire de Bobigny.

Bernard Birsinger, est venu apporter la bonne nouvelle du savoir-faire français dans le financement privé d'équipements publics. Dans ses bagages, l'exemple du « métro léger » de Seine-Saint-Denis (département dont Bobigny est le chef-lieu). Un tramway qui relie les grandes villes du département, exploité par une entreprise publique mais dont les collectivités locales (ville-département) et l'Etat gardent le contrôle. « La France est porteuse d'une école », déclare carrément Bernard Birsinger. L'école de la gestion déléguée.

De quoi s'agit-il exactement ? En fait, les collectivités n'ont plus les reins assez solides pour prendre en charge l'ensemble d'un service public. Aussi confient-elles sa conception, son financement ou sa gestion à un opérateur privé ou public ou à une société d'économie mixte. Celui-ci ou celle-ci assume la bonne marche du service et perçoit une redevance de l'usager. Mais contrairement à une totale privatisation, s'il est autonome, l'opérateur doit rendre des comptes à la collectivité locale qui conserve la maîtrise du service. Au bout de 5 à 20 ans, selon la nature du contrat, on recommence tout et un nouvel appel d'offre est lancé.

### Vague de privatisation

Ce modèle de gestion déléguée est particulièrement répandu en France puisque sur un volume d'activités des services collectifs de 180 milliards de francs, les deux-tiers sont conduits selon cette formule : traitement des déchets, réseau d'eau, transports en commun, chauffage, restauration, parcs de stationnement, tout y passe.

Bien entendu, Bernard Birsinger n'était pas seul. A ses côtés, des représentants du ministère de l'équipement, des transports et du logement ainsi que différentes sociétés privées spécialisées dans la réalisation

ou le financement de services urbains.

De quoi intéresser des Jordaniens - qui surfont en ce moment sur une vague de privatisation - et sont en vogue de projets. Ainsi, Hussein Zaki, le directeur de la santé et de l'environnement à la municipalité a exposé les enjeux d'un traitement des déchets pour le grand Amman. De même le royaume entend s'engager dans la réalisation d'importantes infrastructures (tramway Zarqa-Amman, assainissement de la rivière Zarqa, canalisation Disl-Amman) et semble prêt à faire appel à des opérateurs privés pour le financement et la gestion de ces grands travaux.

Bref, le gâteau des services publics jordaniens ne cesse de prendre de l'importance. Une part devrait d'ailleurs être bientôt croquée. En effet, avant la fin du mois, les autorités jordaniennes devraient décider à qui revient la gestion déléguée de l'eau du grand Amman. Cinq groupes privés sont en lice, dont trois Français, la Générale des Eaux, Suez-Lyonnaise des Eaux et Saur. D'une pierre, deux coups, le séminaire de cette semaine aura permis de rappeler, quelques temps avant la décision finale, les mérites des candidatures françaises.

Le Jourdain



Plus de 3000 pupitres ont été distribués dans les salles de classes les plus démunies.

En réalité, tout a commencé en 1992 quand une délégation de l'association se rend en mission à Bagdad. Elle y étudie la situation des enfants après les ravages de la guerre du Golfe et les effets de l'embargo qui s'avèrent de plus en plus tragiques. A la suite de cette mission, Enfants du monde-Droits de l'homme (EMDH) met en œuvre un premier programme d'urgence de six mois avec l'aide du service d'action humanitaire du ministère des affaires étrangères : ambulances, médicaments, matériel médical sont acheminés et distribués sur place à Bagdad. En 1997, rebelle mais cette fois l'association décide de conduire toutes les opérations depuis la capitale jordanienne. « La Jordanie a

été choisie comme une base arrière logistique, puisqu'elle représente une place incontournable pour aller à Bagdad », explique Hugo Renouard, le responsable de l'association à Amman.

Pour régler toutes les formalités de douanes avec les autorités jordaniennes, c'est l'emplacement idéal. Le programme, d'une durée de six mois, était financé par le Bureau humanitaire de la communauté européenne à hauteur de 3,5 millions de francs. Il vient de s'achever à peu près dans les délais malgré la crise Onu-Irak. « Curieusement, indique Hugo, c'est au plus fort de la crise que nous avons obtenu les autorisations de transport des marchandises du comité des sanctions ». Alors que la résolu-

tion pétrole contre nourriture était en panne, les Organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) ont pu continuer à travailler et recevoir l'aide du comité des sanctions. Il reste que les délais d'attente deviennent de plus en plus longs. Plus de 18 tonnes de marchandises alimentaires, des fournitures scolaires (3000 cahiers), des médicaments, des produits d'hygiène, des vêtements, des draps... ont été distribués dans des instituts spécialisés pour enfants handicapés, des orphelins et des hôpitaux pédiatriques de Bagdad. Le programme a tellement bien marché que EMDH attend un renouvellement pour six mois de la part de son financeur européen. En attendant, la dizaine de membres de l'ONG n'a pas chômé puisqu'ils se sont chargés aussi de la réhabilitation de certains bâtiments en état d'insalubrité. A cet égard, l'Unicef leur a confié plus de 80.000 dollars pour réhabiliter des bâtiments d'orphelins et d'instituts spécialisés à Bagdad et Kərbala.

Depuis Amman, les choses sont allées très vite pour l'association. D'autres ONG françaises telles que Première Urgence lui ont emboîté le pas et ont installé à leur tour un bureau régional en Jordanie. Quant à EMDH, ils ont l'intention de développer leur action sur la Jordanie, elle-même et sur la Palestine.

Rana Kassar-Bagdad

## C'est la vie

L'agenda culturel d'Amman

### Cinéma-Spécial BD

Astérix et le coup du menhir (1989). Dessin animé, couleur, non sous-titré. Le druide Panoramix devient amoureux après avoir reçu sur la tête un menhir lancé par Obélix. Lundi 22 décembre à 16h00 et 20h30 au Centre Culturel Français. Renseignements au 637009 ou 636445.

### Exposition

Où l'on redécouvre le parcours artistique d'Ammar Khammash, le designer qui habille les intérieurs privés et publics jordaniens. Jusqu'au 19 décembre au CCF.



# THE STAR'S WORKSTATION COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

## Essential things IT managers should consider next year: IT Resolutions for the New Year 1998

By Jabra F. Ghneim

**Special to The Star**  
WITH 1998 approaching, Information Systems (IS) or Information Technology (IT) managers all around the world have a pretty good idea how their IT budgets will be spent next year. If they don't yet, then they had better start. Decisions made now are essential for a healthy IT environment in corporations, at least for the next three years.

In 1998, managers in the region will be faced with a host of key decisions to make. Some are mentioned in this article hoping to direct the thoughts of managers to the more urgent IT issues.

### 1) The Internet:

Getting connected to the Internet is a must. I believe that each organization in Jordan should have an Internet connection, and e-mail. For big organizations working on attracting business from abroad a mini web site is a must. This is not a luxury anymore. It is a necessity. A web site improves the corporate image of any firm establishes a stronger brand name and communicates the information you want to communicate about your organization more than anything else.

So, if you don't have an Internet site, seriously consider building one.

### 2) The Y2K (Year 2000 problem)

Will your data and computer software be useless on the 1st of January 2000? It depends. If you are a large organization and depend on old legacy systems written in COBOL, or use older versions of UNIX then

tion to hardware with up to date BIOS chips have no Y2K problem. Try changing the date in your Win95 or NT to 2000 or 2012 and there will be no problem there. Since computerization in this region is relatively new, corporations have no big Y2K problems to worry about. The small size of most installations makes updating software and hardware the path of minimal cost for most organizations.

### 3) Asset Management

This is another IT headache. Medium sized and large corporations face unnecessary costs sometimes. These costs occur as a result of overestimating or underestimating the real size of an IT installation. Sometimes, management has to pay for service contracts on hardware that has been sold a year or two ago, or license fees on software that is not used anymore, or even excess equipment which are not used anymore. To efficiently manage your equipment and avoid any unnecessary costs it is essential to have a system of some sort to track and manage your assets. Computer Associates (CA) provides such solutions, add to that the TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) revolution which forced major hardware and software

## Computer & IT companies !!

### Microsoft appeals ruling against its bundling of Explorer with Win95: The Microsoft browser saga continues

FOLLOWING THE court decision that Microsoft temporarily halts the bundling of Microsoft Internet Explorer with Windows 95, Microsoft is appealing the ruling. As the company says "it does not believe the ruling to be legally sound".

In any case, the whole browser-saga does not mean any changes to the planned launch of Windows 98 scheduled for the second quarter of 1998.

However, Microsoft will prepare a version of the new operating system without Internet Explorer. PC makers are beginning to react to this matter, by providing their customers with the option to select Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator separately.

Still, some major suppliers say that they will continue to ship their PCs with Microsoft's Web browser. Such a company is Micron which says that they could not remove Internet Explorer from their shipments "because that's what customers are demanding".

On another note, Netscape Communications wishes to capitalize on this opportunity and is preparing an aggressive sales and pricing strategy for its Internet browsing products.

organized strategy to address these issues will save much time and money.

Ignoring or procrastinating will produce many regrets and a loss of decision-making efficiency that will be noticed sooner than any one would expect.

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## INTERFACE BY ZEID NASSER

### How many people are really on-line?

WITH THE Internet still growing and becoming more and more a fact of life for almost every computer user in Jordan, one has to stop to look at the "unofficial figures" on the number of people on-line. Estimates in the past have been somewhat inaccurate, simply due to the overlap between customers on different services. Prior to the launch of other Internet Service Providers (during the summer of 1997), everyone on-line was either subscribed to Global One—the only Internet Service Provider at the time—NETS or Primus—both of whom were purely Bulletin Board Services (BBSs).

Back then, a "conservative" estimate would have put the number of on-line users at around 3,000 at Global One; 2,300 at NETS; 700 at Primus. The total would come to around 6,000 user on-line on the different services. Of course, it is estimated that there could have been up to a 20% overlap, with a considerable number of users subscribed to both NETS and Global One or Primus and Global One. So, actual users on line could be just under 5,000.

The way this estimate was drawn was hardly empirical, in the sense that there was little or no information you could get from on-line service providers. It was a "rough" estimate based on the statements of every on-line service as to the number of its users. Nowadays, with three new active Internet Service Providers (ISPs)—NETS, Index and First Net—and a couple more launching Internet services very soon—such as Join Net—there seems to be a general consensus that there is going to be explosive growth in the number of Internet on-line users in the country, to justify this huge number of ISPs. So, at this stage, we need to ask the following question: how many computers equipped with modems exist in the country?

Well, according to some modem suppliers I talked to, virtually every business PC system sold since late 1996 was equipped with a modem, either built-in or added.

Seeing as there are no comprehensive studies on the numbers of business PCs or home PCs, we have to assume that "most PCs sold in Jordan since late 1996 include a modem". Specialized researchers, who survey Middle East markets, estimated that around 7,000 PCs were sold in Jordan last year.

Every PC supplier I talked to laughed at this figure and believed that the real figure would have to be in the region of 15,000—that's at least double the estimated figure! The reason is a lot of smuggling of computer parts that takes place. Modern suppliers can substantiate these facts, as the aggregate level of modem sales for all suppliers is obviously serving a market if more than just 7,000 new PCs a year.

Alright, now this takes us back to our initial question: How many people are expected to require Internet or on-line services in the country? Is there enough to go around, or will the ISP market break up into two or three huge ISPs with most of the users subscribed to them, while the remaining three or four fight it out for the "few" remaining?

Well, it is surely soon to judge, but Global One and NETS seem to be getting the lion's share at the moment, but their most formidable competitor seems to be First Net, which will grasp a piece of the pie. This whole argument on how many people are "really" on-line and how many are expected to be on-line in the near future is the golden question, which everyone is asking.

Isn't it time somebody studied it scientifically? After all those millions of Dinars invested by ISPs in start offering their services, wouldn't it be somewhat comforting for them to know if there really is a sizable market out there?

If I were an ISP, I would really be worried. Wouldn't you?

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# The Star's TV GUIDE

Programs on JTV  
from 20 - 26 December

## ENGLISH PROGRAMS

## SATURDAY

2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—Twinkle  
2:30—Muppet Show  
3:00—The Ultimate Stuntman  
4:00—Beakman's World  
4:30—Neighbors  
5:00—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Perspective  
8:00—Perfect Strangers  
8:30—Prison  
9:10—Time Trax  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—Feature Film: *The Only Way Out*  
12:00—Ellen

## SUNDAY

2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—The Pink Panther  
2:30—Johnny Quest  
3:00—Energy Express  
4:00—American Chart Show  
4:30—Tarzan  
6:00—French Programs  
7:00—News in French  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Kate and Allie  
8:00—Cinema Cinema  
8:30—Submarines  
9:10—Renegade  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—North & South  
11:10—The Jewel in the Crown

## MONDAY

2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—The Show With the Mouse  
2:30—Hammerman  
3:00—Gillette Sports Special  
3:15—Riding High  
3:30—Animal Show  
4:00—Oliver Twist  
4:30—Neighbors  
5:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Murphy Brown  
8:00—The Health Show  
8:30—Babylo-5  
9:10—Highlander  
10:00—News at Ten



Life on the Internet, Friday 7:30

## TUESDAY

2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—Sandocan  
2:30—C.R.O.  
3:00—Skiing  
3:30—The Album Show  
4:30—Square One TV  
5:15—French Programs  
7:00—News in French  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—You Bet Your Life  
8:00—Skeleton Coast  
8:30—Encounter  
9:10—Hollywood Remembers  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—Magaret Volant  
11:15—Scarlet and Black

## WEDNESDAY

2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—Johnny Quest  
3:00—Art Box  
3:30—The Munsters Today  
4:00—Border Town  
4:30—Neighbors  
5:00—French Programs  
7:00—News in French  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Yanni  
8:25—Feature Film: *Dr. Zhivago (Part I)*  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—Feature Film: *Dr. Zhivago (Part II)*  
12:00—Garth Brooks in Concert (Country Music)

## THURSDAY

2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—Peter Rabbit  
2:30—Hollywood Stunts Makers  
3:00—What I Would You Do?  
3:30—Feature Film: *The Legend of Gatorface*  
5:00—French Programs  
7:00—News in French  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Trivial Pursuit  
8:00—The Parenthood  
8:30—Feature Film: *The Pirate Prince*  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—The Wall (Concert)  
12:00—Feature Film: *How to Murder a Millionaire*

## FRIDAY

2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—The Adventure of Teddy Ruxpin  
2:30—Fred and Barney  
3:00—Wish Bone  
3:30—Lucky Luke  
4:00—Family Matters  
4:30—Natural Wonders of Europe  
5:00—French Programs  
7:00—News in French  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Life on the Internet  
8:00—Are you Being Served  
8:30—Adventures of Brisco County  
9:10—Horizon  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—Best Seller  
11:30—Feature Film

## PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

**SAMEDI**  
5:00—Bêtes pas Bêtes  
5:15—Regarde le monde  
5:30—Secrets de famille  
6:00—Les grottes de Bornéo

## 7:00—Le journal

7:15—Magazine

## DIMANCHE

5:00—Micro Kids  
5:15—Regarde le monde  
5:30—Secrets de famille  
6:00—Magazine  
7:00—Le journal  
7:15—Magazine pour tous

## LUNDI

5:00—Bêtes pas Bêtes  
5:15—Regarde le monde  
5:30—Secrets de famille  
6:00—Thalassa  
7:00—Le journal  
7:15—Magazine scientifique

## MARDI

5:00—Bêtes pas Bêtes  
5:15—Regarde le monde  
5:30—Secrets de famille  
6:00—Navoir plus santé  
7:00—Le journal  
7:15—Orient sur Seine

## MERCREDI

5:00—Micro Kids  
5:15—Regarde le monde  
5:30—Qui est qui  
6:00—Ushuaia  
7:00—Le journal  
7:15—E = M<sup>2</sup>

## JEUDI

5:00—Un jour, une fête  
5:30—Le monde est à vous  
7:00—Le journal  
7:15—Le dessin des cartes

## VENDREDI

5:30—Le juge Cordier  
7:00—Le journal  
7:15—Magazine  
Allo la terre

Programs are subject to change by JTV



## Amman cinemas

- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): Air Force One
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): Conspiracy Theory
- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): Hercules & Amazon Women
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): Liar - Liar
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): Al Maseer (Arabic)
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): A Crime at The White House
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): Mr. Bean

## MOVIE

## In funny 'Harry,' Woody Allen drops the mask

By Kenneth Turan

HOLLYWOOD—People are going to be furious at Woody Allen's latest film and it's not difficult to see why. Writer Harry Black, played by Allen himself, is petty, spiteful and vindictive and his self-absorbed, misogynistic antics are painful to experience.

But "Deconstructing Harry" is also bracingly funny, and from a dramatic and psychological point of view, it is compelling viewing. A bravura act of self-revelation, its vivid portrait of one man's fears, fantasies and neuroses uses a mixture of reality, imagination and comedy to create one of the writer-director's most involving films.

What makes "Harry" especially fascinating is the way it counterpoints recent Allen films such as "Mighty Aphrodite" and "Everyone Says I Love You." There, too, he played an unlikely Lothario who always manages off-putting romantic scenes with young and attractive actresses. But while those films have been unhappy masquerades, trying without success to pass off their smarmy aspects as light entertainment, Allen here drops the mask.

So though Harry Black's actions are familiar, no attempt is made to paint them as charming. Allen, in fact, originally wanted to title his film "The Worst Man in the World," and the jazz standard "Twisted," with lyrics like "My analyst told me I was out of my head," runs over the opening credits. Spiritually bankrupt and sexually obsessed, Harry is uncompromisingly presented as an unsavory scoundrel, albeit one with a sense of humor. Told that his life is all about nihilism, sarcasm and orgasm, Harry shoots back, "In France, I could run on that ticket and win."

Less a mea culpa than an ecce homo, "Harry" feels, despite pro forma disclaimers to the contrary, like the most nakedly autobiographical of Allen's recent works, complete with the usual references to baseball, Chinese food, therapy and Manhattan's Upper West Side. In this, his 28th theatrical feature, the director has come closest to the lacerating and defiant self-revelation of one of his idols, Ingmar Bergman, though it goes without saying that Allen's soul is both funnier and considerably more Jewish than Scandinavian.

Twenty-eight is a lot of features, and while some have a tossed-off, who-cares feeling about them, "Harry" is the opposite. Its intricate and carefully worked out structure would be beyond a less experienced director, and Allen, collaborating once again with cinematographer Carlo di Palma and editor Susan E. Morse, has worked more substance into his 95 minutes than many of this season's behemoths have managed at twice that length.

"Harry's" opening sequences give an indication of Allen's method. Lucy (Judy Davis) is shown furiously exiting a Manhattan cab on a rainy night not one but some half a dozen times, the repetition emphasizing the extent of her rage. Then comes a vacation home scene where a writer named Ken (Richard Benjamin) is seen having farcical sex with his sister-in-law Leslie (Julia Louis-Dreyfus).

Next it's back to Lucy, who has come to Harry's house with the intent of murdering him because his last novel caused the breakup of Lucy's marriage and created a rift between Lucy and her sister Jane (Amy Irving). Harry's third wife. The farcical sex scene we've just seen turns out to be a dramatization of Harry's novel, and Lucy is the real-life sister-in-law who's had to face the effects of Harry's callous use of personal experience in his fiction. "You take everyone's suffering and turn it into gold," Lucy hisses at him as only Judy Davis can. "I want to kill the black magician."

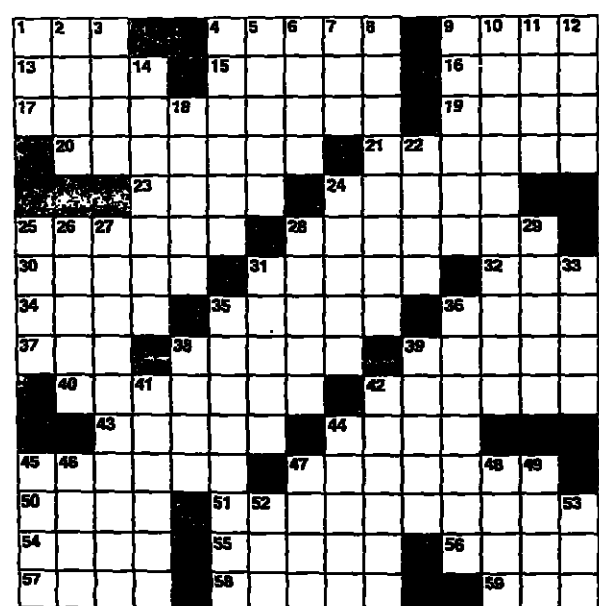
Lucy may be hysterical, but she is dead-on correct. Harry has always headlessly exploited the people closest to him for his work and been indifferent about the consequences. And among this film's cleverest aspects are dramatizations of Harry's earlier fiction, including a deft Kafkaesque story about an actor named Mel (Robin Williams) who wakes up one morning and finds himself literally out of focus. Harry even meets one of his fictional doppelgängers, outside the Red Apple Rest, a venerable New Jersey roadside restaurant, and has a conversation with the double about the kind of person he's become.

"Deconstructing Harry" also exposes us to the contorted personal side of a blocked writer who drinks too much, swallows pills to counteract depression, is ambivalent (at best) about being Jewish and complains to his latest analyst about the way his compulsive sexual fantasies have wrecked havoc with his life. "Did Raoul Wallenberg," he muses, "want to bang every cocktail waitress in Europe?"

After being simultaneously involved with wife Jane and sister Lucy, Harry left both of them to carry on with the (what else but) younger and more attractive Fay (Elizabeth Shue). And the writer's selfish attempts to manipulate her life for his own short-term benefit is one of the film's major strands.

In the midst of all this, Harry learns he's to get an award from Adair, the college that expelled him once upon a time. Not surprisingly given his repellent personality, no one wants to go with him to the presentation, and the group he ends up with—including his young son, old friend Richard (Bob Balaban) and a hooker named Cookie (Hazel Goodman)—leads to absurdist scenarios that are comical and devastating.

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



## ACROSS

- 1 Compensation  
4 Fan  
9 Brenner Pass range  
13 Aphrodite's son  
15 City on the Missouri  
16 Canon film  
17 Seliger film (with 'Thel')  
19 Outdrigger  
20 Easily shaped  
21 Thrust into  
22 Dance starlet  
24 Campus figures  
25 Handled with care  
28 Superior courage  
30 Islands (Baltic Sea)

## DOWN

- 31 Impish  
32 Sandwich meat  
34 Fine  
35 Wimbledon winner  
36 Wise men  
37 Flying pack  
38 Compulsion  
39 Stable  
40 occupants  
41 Dosage  
42 device  
43 Princeton players  
44 Great Dane  
45 Guy  
46 Complaint  
47 Tropical fish  
50 Mary  
51 millennia  
52 Inhabitable  
54 Unchit  
55 Sioux dwelling

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## THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: The Sagittarius sun brings joy and congeniality to all. That's important to remember when the Capricorn moon places restrictions on many.

**Aries (March 21-April 19).** Responsibilities clash with your travel plans. You'll soon start finding ways to break free. Your friends demand most of your attention. Don't forget an assignment that must be finished.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20).** You're doing very well considering the handicap you're under. Finish up a tough job while you still have the advantage. Keep travel to a minimum.

**Gemini (May 21-June 21).** Pool resources with a friend to get what you want. The same goes for travel. Together you can get there. Study your favorite foreign language with a native speaker. You'll learn something very interesting.

**Cancer (June 22-July 22).** Your workload is intense, but a partner helps out. Don't get into an argument. It'll only waste time. Pool your resources to get something you both want badly. Find a source of new funding. Research may be required.

**Leo (July 23-Aug. 22).** Although your attitude is good, the workload is horrendous. Don't complain. Just get it done. Tackle a tough assignment so you can play with your mate. Delegate a technical assignment to a partner and you'll do better on a tough job.

**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).** Make a romantic commitment. That bond helps you handle confusion at home. You might not have time for much, so don't schedule anything.

**Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).** Read the manual so you can solve a problem at home all by yourself. You'll be so proud once you have. You and your sweetheart can finalize plans.

**Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).** Pay attention. The skills you are learning could lead to an increase in income. Plan ahead to solve a problem at home. Share the workload and you'll have more time for creativity. Meet with your sweetheart.

**Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).** Money's tight, especially if you say so. Don't let anybody talk you out of your hard-won resources. Practice new skills.

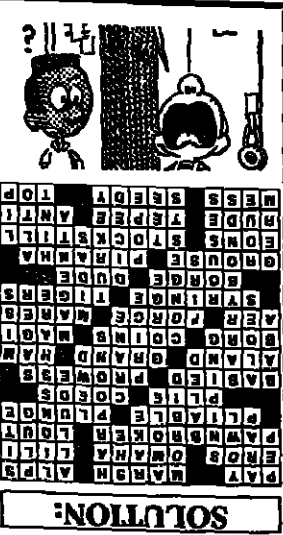
**Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).** You're super-efficient. Push yourself to finish an old job quickly. Slick maneuvering leads to an increase in income.

**Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).** You're under a bit of pressure, but your friends help you out. Let them know what you need, and they'll come up with amazing ideas.

**Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20).** You and your friends can outwit an older person. Don't be too obvious about it. The plot thickens. You may discover work you've forgotten to turn in.

**If You're Having a Birthday This Week:** You're lucky with money. If you study and are aggressive, you'll gain even more. Your perseverance pays, literally.

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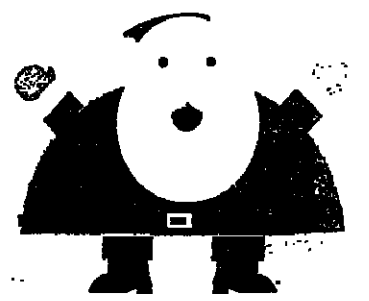
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18 DECEMBER 1997

P E O P L E

THE STAR 11

# Merry Christmas Happy New Year



By Anca de Maio  
Special to The Star

**WHO'S THIS** chubby jolly white-bearded man dressed in a red suit trimmed with white fur that rides through the five continents in December bringing presents to children, sometimes sliding down the chimney at night, sometimes knocking at the door like everybody else on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day?

Is he the old Scandinavian Joulupukki, since his sleigh is drawn through the air by eight flying reindeers? Is he St. Nicholas himself, as many call him Santa Claus or simply Santa? Is he the real descendant of the Biblical Magi, the three wise men that came from the Orient, following the magic twinkle of a new star in the sky, to give precious presents to child Jesus? Or is he rather a creation of this century, a red-and-white commercial image that has proliferated in all consuming societies just like Coca-Cola?

Although it is not very clear how Father Christmas's contemporary "look" came about, it is certain that it is the result of a continuous amalgamation of many old folk customs and beliefs from varied sources. Tracing back the Christmas tradition, the idea of present-giving was always associated to the celebration, even if the gift-bringers had a holier aura than today's Santa. First and foremost, there is the image of the Magi as inferred from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and reproduced in the Middle Ages as miniature replicas of the nativity scene to Catholic way of bringing to mind Jesus's birth in a stable in Bethlehem.

There is the Roman custom of giving presents of good luck to children during Saturnalia, an important pagan festival celebrating the winter solstice and the coming of spring, which was incorporated by a Christian priest in the church celebration. And, the last but not the least, there is St. Nicholas, a 4th-century bishop of Asia minor known as the patron saint of children, sailors and the poor, which is celebrated on 6 December.

Because of the proximity of dates, 25 December was proclaimed as the date of the Nativity in 354 AD although Armenian and Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas on 6 January, which is for the others the baptismal day of Jesus or the day of the three magi. Christmas and St. Nicholas's day are now celebrated simultaneously in many countries. Originally presents were received on 6 December, but after the Reformation, German Protestants encouraged gift-giving on Christmas day. Traditionally, St. Nicholas was depicted as a tall, dignified ecclesiastical figure riding a white horse and giving sweets to children and helping the poor.

After an austere period imposed by the Puritans in which merrymaking Christmas festivities with large quantities of food and joyous songs were practically banned, Christmas traditions were revived in Victorian times. The familiar image of a good-humoured round-bellied Santa Claus, complete with sleigh, reindeers and sack of toys seems to be an American invention of the 19th century. Built up on the Dutch figure of St. Nicholas which settlers brought with them to New Amsterdam (now New York), contemporary Santa Claus is the result of a series of transformations. The definitive touches were brought by cartoonist Thomas Nast in Harper's magazine in 1868, as an illustration of a poem by Clement Clarke Moore titled A Visit from Saint Nicholas (1823).

A mixture of religious and pagan traditions from many European countries, newer American customs, Father Christmas's modern legend has been created out of the need for a coherent logical story. Such elements as the reindeers, the sock, the North Pole, etc. are probably simple logical fill-ins that round off the modernized legend. Very convincing, of course. Scandinavians, many of who recognized many of these details as theirs, American cults became popular in Europe very fast. Thus, far in Europe very fast, Finland's Joulupukki of French-land, Papa Noel of French-land, speaking countries, English Father Christmas and American Santa are very much alike.

Spread from Europe to

## Who is Father Christmas?

North America, and from America back to Europe and the rest of the world, the modern figure of these gift-bringers is today a universal accessory to the Christmas traditions from all over the world.

While century-old folk traditions have preserved their authentic forms mainly in rural areas of less "Occidentalized" countries (in Eastern Europe, for example), the modernized version of Christmas celebration is definitely prevailing in Western and Western-like societies.

In most cases part of its religious content has been lost, but its attractive formal rituals of the decorated tree, copious meals and gift-giving have got incredible proportions. Advertising, greeting cards, seasonal decorations and the ever more frequent appearance of Santas in department stores uphold the modern legend and commercial image of Father Christmas.

Today, Christmas is as much a secular festival as a religious one. Every year at Xmas time in many parts of the world, including countries with no Christian roots or with small Christian communities like Turkey or Japan, fir-trees are set up with decorations and lights, shop win-



dows and streets are abundantly adorned. In such a special setting Santa turns up with his huge sack of presents to stimulate commercial activities in supermarkets.

"In Turkey the New Year's Eve is reserved for present-giving," explained Mr. Murat Tamer, the second secretary at the Turkish Embassy in Amman, stressing that "this winter celebration has no religious connotation at all: it just gives the end of the year a very pleasant atmosphere."

What is special about

Christmas in Australia, Latin America and Africa, is the fact that it is celebrated in a mid-summer setting. In spite of the hot weather, the image of Father Christmas coming from the Polar Circle has been accepted in almost every detail. As Christmas implies winter, artificial snow has been invented. With a natural rosy blush, cotton-bearded Santas stoically carry their heavy sacks dressed in his red long robes.

"Basically brought from Britain, our Christmas traditions are so similar to the

European ones that even Christmas trees are covered with...artificial snow," said Mr. Greenham, the first secretary of the Embassy of South Africa in Amman. "And so are the shop windows at Christmas time in Chile," added Mr. George Iglesias, the Ambassador of this country to Jordan. "It is almost ridiculous to see all these winter decorations everywhere around you when the weather is above 30," he continued.

"In Australia some people bake the turkey at home and take it to the beach as the main dish of their Christmas picnic," said Mrs. Merry Wickes, the Ambassador of Australia to the Kingdom. "Others have prawns and turkey for the Christmas lunch and go to the beach in the afternoon," she said.

Similarly, indoors family reunions near a cosy fireplace are replaced with picnics on the beach by the Peruvians and the South Africans living on the coast. In Chile, on the contrary, even if Christmas takes place in the middle of summer, people are more attached to the Catholic traditions and families prefer to gather for

Christmas lunch at home.

In countries like Australia or Canada, Christmas rites have different sources. Hence a large variety of customs. "In Canada, a country of immigrants, many of our traditions come either from France, Germany, England, Scotland and Ireland," Mr. Laurent Beaulieu, first secretary of the Embassy of Canada in Amman pointed out.

"Canadians started to celebrate Christmas in 1763 and the first Christmas tree was set up in 1775 by the wife of the Military Governor of Montreal (both of Prussian origin)," he continued. "Common in German countries for centuries, the tradition of the Christmas tree was brought to Britain and spread in Canada by Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's Consort. "Although many of our traditional dishes are basically English, Scottish and French, native gastronomic influences were also borrowed from our own aboriginal people," he said.

"In French Canada the traditional Christmas dishes are the so-called 'tourtiere' a pie which originally made with 'tourte', a bird now extinct in our country, and currently made with pork) and 'cipaille' (another type of meat pie)," Mr. Beaulieu exemplified. "Otherwise, people eat turkey and cranberries, with stuffing made of pork sausages and chestnuts. The traditional cake is called 'Bûche de Noël' and it is looks like a piece of log," he described. "People serve goose or duck or even roast beef on Christmas day and for dessert they have plum pudding."

As a matter of fact, prior to 1945 and the prosperity seen by the Western countries following the Second World War, gift-giving was symbolic or limited to wealthy families. "At that time in Canada gifts were given only

to children, usually an orange (an expensive exotic fruit in winter), a wooden toy, a doll made of rags or a book for an older child, while bad children received only a lump of coal," evokes Mr. Beaulieu. "Children left out with their socks the cookies and milk for Santa Claus or Pere Noel as he is known in French Canada," he said. "However, gifts in those days were

always given on New Year's Day and not before, whereas today the fashion is to give gifts on Christmas morning. "On Christmas Eve in Canada families and friends get together. In French Canada people go to Midnight Mass, while in Protestant families religious services take place on Christmas morning," he said. "After the Midnight Mass people gather for the Reveillon, a Normand French tradition, in which even the poor of the village come and receive food and gifts in remembrance of the birth of Jesus in poverty in Bethlehem," he concluded. ■

### Hotel Inter.Continental bids farewell to Mr Ayoub and welcomes new general manager

A COCKTAIL reception was held at the Hotel Inter.Continental Jordan on Thursday 11 December to bid farewell to the General Manager Mr Chawqel Ayoub who has been transferred to Oman to manage the Gulf Forum Hotel in Muscat. Mr Ayoub arrived in Jordan six years ago. Since then Hotel Inter.Continental Jordan introduced new restaurants and outlets and the hotel started major expansions.

Mr Jonathan Soper will succeed Mr Ayoub as General Manager for Hotel Inter.Continental Jordan in addition he is also the Regional Director of Operations for Jordan. Mr Soper arrives from the United Arab Emirates where he held the position of General Manager



for the Abu-Dhabi Inter.Continental Hotel. Mr Soper has been with the Inter.Continental Hotels & Resorts for more than 18 years. The Cocktail reception was hosted by the Board of Directors of Jordan Hotels & Tourism Co., Ltd., and The Management of Hotel Inter.Continental Jordan and attended by a large number of officials, Businessmen, travel agents, members of the diplomatic missions, and the press. ■

### What.. Do Kids Really Wish? In Christmas & New Year



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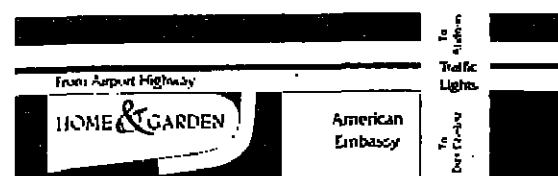
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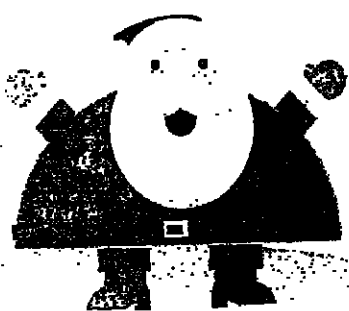
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شركة التجارة المفروشات





# Merry Christmas Happy New Year

Days leading up to Christmas

## Braving the chilly nights of Amman

By Ibtisam Awadat  
Special to The Star

CHRISTMAS IS fast approaching, and the preparations for celebration are going on perfectly, the cold evenings don't prevent people from going out shopping—they are found in every store.

In Jabal Al Hussein, the clothes and shoe shops are working at their full capacity to satisfy the needs of customers, and in every corner, you can find a well-decorated tree. In one store, children try on different clothes while their parents, by this time on the edge of anger, try to convince them that what they selected was the best choice, but to no avail. On the other hand, shop assistants are very patient in dealing with moody customers.

But the obvious movement is found in Shmeisani, in supermarkets and in big stores

where everything can be found. In the entrance to one of these supermarkets, a small tent was hoisted specially for children to enter; inside it is a small Christmas tree with lights and bells and a small wooden chair so that children can sit on, and take their photographs, free of course.

On the second floor, a special section is devoted to the investment companies in Jordan to exhibit their products. These include plastic trees with supplement decorations like shining balls, lights, colorful ropes and also diadems to put candles on.

"The exhibited products are made in China, Spain and France they are best quality," an employee told *The Star*. "We have a section for Santa Claus, 'Papa Noel' dolls which can move and play music for reasonable prices, besides, there are ceramic dolls made

in Spain only for Christmas," the employee added.

Moving from one section to another, one color dominates: Red. There is red dolls, red socks, red pillows and even red lighting. There is also many interesting offers, one says "buy one plastic tree and take 20 free shining balls, or red bells," another offer says "buy cassettes and take a gift."

In the stores, it's a 24 hour job, whenever an item is sold, it is immediately replaced by another. As they say children are the first to benefit from the celebrations—they were running around the decorated trees and trying to open the boxes hung on the branches of the trees.

Outside, in front of one of the supermarkets downtown, one was wearing the clothes of Santa Claus, having a white beard and carrying a bell in one hand and a sack in the other



who started to distribute items to customers and pedestrians. Children and even young people stood beside him and took photos and some gifts.

In hotels and commercial centers, huge trees took their usual place, so that pedestrians

can see the red lights from a distance and be encouraged to go in and browse around while staying away from the cold winter nights.

In another store, people crowded besides the cold air coming out from freezers look-

ing at big frozen Turkeys that will be the guest of honour on the Christmas table.

Merry Christmas is the habitual greeting on such occasion—you can find it everywhere written in colorful letters. ■



### Hotel Inter-Continental

What better way to do your season's shopping than to step into the lobby where you will find all kinds of Christmas food items.

15-25 December 1997 at the lobby.

Christmas would not be complete without a fun-filled party for children and a guest appearance by Santa Claus, of course. And this year, the Inter-Continental is offering just that at its annual Children's Christmas Party—an afternoon packed with food, games and a photo opportunity with Santa! 18 December 1997, 4:00-6:00 p.m. Price: JD 10,000 inclusive.

How about a touch of the unusual, of the extraordinary this holiday season? Chef Dilsad Bahadour of Bukhara has just the answer for you. His carefully prepared selection of delicious Indian cuisine will make your Christmas dinner delightfully different.

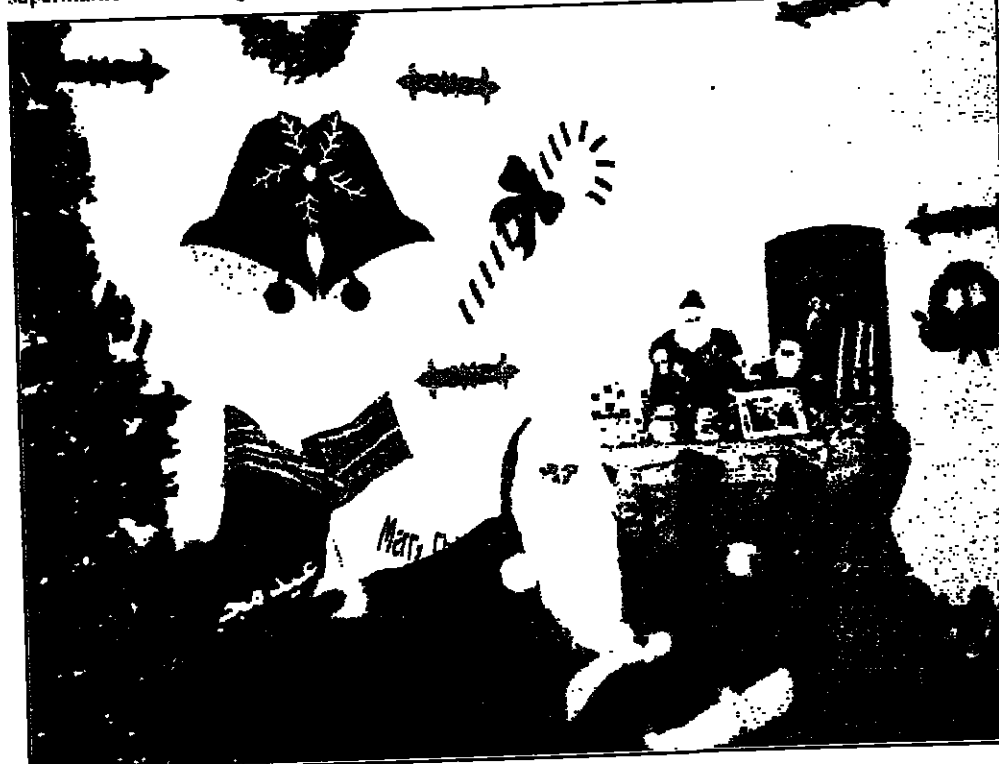
For those of you who believe Christmas would not be Christmas without the traditional turkey feast, Okaz is the place for you. With your choice of a special Christmas buffet or set menu, the wide selection holiday favourites will make you feel right at home. 24 December 1997.

You need not travel far for a Mexican-style Christmas. This year, Mama Juanita invites you to experience a vibrant and high-spirited Christmas with a special cultural celebration. The unique Mexican Christmas cuisine and decorations will make you forget where you are... 24 December 1997.

Be our guests on Christmas Day and enjoy a scrumptious brunch in the Grand Ballroom where Santa Claus will be handing out gifts... or indulge in a delicious lunch at Okaz. Bukhara or Mexican with the mouthwatering menus you have grown accustomed to. Christmas Brunch: JD 18,000 inclusive 12:30-3:30 p.m.

Come and spend an unforgettable evening with the renowned Arab singer, Kathem Al Saher at a gala dinner in the

Continued on page 13



## Enjoy the delights of AlQasr hotel

As usual, AL QASR HOTEL provides the Jordanian community with all what's new and qualitative in industry.

This year Alqasr is making a special buffet from all over the world prepared by the new Lebanese chef coming specially for this event. From China to France, from Italy to Lebanon besides Xmas dishes and desserts. Also, the special recipe of the hot wine will be in the buffet for as much as the guests would like.

Besides that, great tunes for adults and children will be provided by the guitarist and famous saxophonist, Joseph, while Santa gives presents to the kids. This great atmosphere together with the music and decoration will be in a span of 3 days and nights starting 24 December until Friday 26 December. ■



## Inter.Con pays visit to Mar-Mansour Orphanage

THE MANAGEMENT and staff of Inter-Continental Jordan accompanied Father Christmas to visit the Mar-Mansour Orphanage home.

The children were delighted to see Santa who gave them their Xmas presents. In appreciation the children performed some beautiful dances and *dabkas*.

The Inter.Con management thanked the Mar-Mansour Orphanage for sharing some time with them and wished all the children a merry Xmas and a happy New Year. ■



## The touch of the Arab east continues to live on in Cuba

By Koffi Attah  
Special to The Star

MOORISH OCCUPATION of Spain may have ended centuries ago, but its everlasting impact still permeates contemporary architecture in that country and beyond. Edgardo Rodriguez's photography exhibition focusing on Arab architecture in Cuba attests not only to the continuing fascination that the Cubans hold for the rich Arab architectural heritage but also to their civilization.

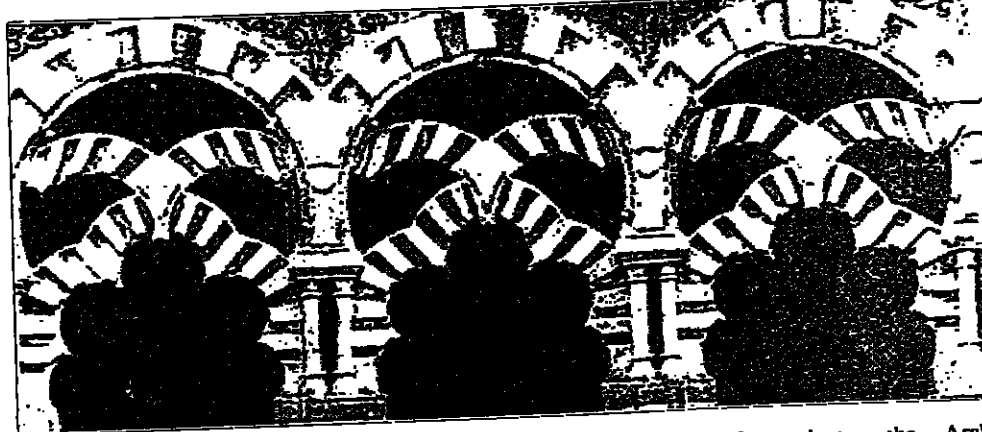
Arab influence gave birth to Andalusian architectural designs, the symbol of Arab conquest of Spain which the Spaniards introduced into their American colonies, notably Cuba in 1492. Today, Arab-Islamic architecture looms large in Cuba. The glorious

architectural heritage, still lives, colourful and strong. It reposes in many constructions and edifices across the length and breadth of the country.

Rodriguez, a Cuban photographer born in Havana in 1936 and died in 1995, is a true artist. His exhibition presents an impressive collection of photographs on Arab-Islamic architectural designs in Cuba.

Each photograph has a distinct context and form, and conveys a particular set of information. The late photographer has organized various photography exhibitions in Europe and America. He once represented his nation in the world photography exhibition held in Montreal, Canada.

His 36 photographs on Arab-Islamic architecture in Cuba, now on display at the Exhibi-



tion Hall of Cervantes Institute of the Spanish Culture Center are both demonstrative and instructive. Only 14 out of the 36 pictures are colour prints, depicting residential homes and an entire quarters, dating from the medieval and Andalusian periods for which Arab conquest of Spain was known for.

Walking into the area on the right side of the gallery, are all black and white photographs. Most are limited to the significance of Arab-Islamic civilization and important architectural design which may not exist anywhere in the world today apart from Al Azhar in Cairo. "These designs are very unique," says Mr Hamdan Khalid, of the Culture Center.

In the other section of the hall to the left is a number of paintings by Jordanian artists such as Adnan Al Sharif, Larisa Najjar, Khalid Khreis, Mohammed Kaitokah, Clara Amado, Fatima El Halou etc. The paintings are on permanent display.

The most remarkable example of Arab-Islamic civilisation still alive in Cuba are two photographs showing an exhibition hall opened in 1987 for exhibiting Arab arts and handicrafts. One of the pictures shows Arab carpets, prayer rugs, cushions, basketry and other handi-

crafts. The other one portrays works by Palestinian, Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese artists.

The final set of pictures illustrate various Arab-Islamic designs such as ceilings, different types of balconies and hallways. In general Rodriguez's exhibition exposes the rich civilization that still lives on in Cuba. Most of the pictures were taken in 1993, 94 and 95 covering the period between 1600 BC and 1700 BC.

Although, today in Cuba, there is only 35000 people and

2000 students, the Arab-Islamic imprint is as strong as ever.

The exhibition is jointly organized by the Cervantes Institute of Amman the Cuban Embassy in Syria.

"We organize such exhibitions once or twice a month to promote Spanish and Arabic art," said Mr Tahsin Al Ojeli, the one responsible for cultural activities in the institute.

The exhibition continues till 20 December. ■

## Sami for Optics, new specialist for eyesight

THE NEW Sami for Optics has just opened in Al Jubeha. The center has the latest in optical glasses providing the customer with the most up-to-date in designer frames. Sami for Optics also has optical specialists to carry out eyesight tests right on the very center. Sami for Optics also have the latest designs in sun glasses at reasonable prices. ■



## Good readings are found in the Amman Bookshop

AMMAN (Star)—The Amman Bookshop is one of the cultural monuments in the capital. It was established in 1965 to sell books and stationery.

The owner of the bookshop is today Mr Usama She'shaa who has interests in literature and culture, that is besides the fact that he is a newspaper columnist.

"The bookshop has been transformed into a major English center that maintains excellent relations with leading publishing houses worldwide," Mr She'shaa said.

In addition to the normal things which you can find in libraries, the Amman's Bookshop can be considered as a cultural saloon where you can drink coffee and listen to the music in a civilized atmosphere, meanwhile you can browse through the latest international publications available in the bookshop.

"We also receive titles of books in the world, every



the English works. Whatever your interests are, it can be found there. Novels for famous writers, books about the countries, archaeology, customs, even cuisine on how to cook and to create your favourite dishes.

"One of the most exciting sections we have is art and artists, design and architecture as well as an intensive children library."

Mr She'shaa continued that bestsellers are carefully selected from *The New York Review of Books* and the *Times Literary Supplement* both of which arrive every Thursday.

The clients of the bookshop are from all ages, so members of the whole family can find what they under one place.

The Amman Bookshop is the only one in the Kingdom which has books about theatre. And if you have artistic hobbies you can find books about international artists like Vincent Van Gogh and Michael Angelo. ■

December 1997-January 1998

Arabian and Islamic motifs  
by  
Rima Farah - embossed etchings  
Fatima Issa - paintings.

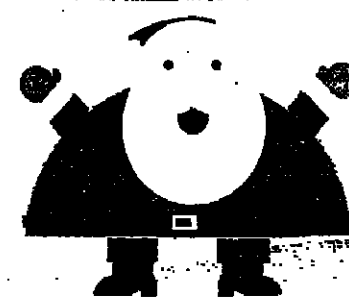
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مكتبة سامي



# Merry Christmas Happy New Year



## Growing into the Bond role

By Nigel Andrews

THE NEW James Bond enterprise comes with an intriguing [Help & Information] plot. A group of media masterminds bent on world dominance rock the money markets with an explosive overspend. [Buy the Newspaper] Calamities unspeakable, major and minor. The project director fights with the "ideas man": a top woman employee bursts into tears when handed a radical new work-brief; and two [advertisement] key players, male and female, quarrel publicly. She [Transport] accuses his beard stubble of scraping her face, he slaps her off for charmlessness in the press.

And all this is only off the screen. That the problem-riddled Tomorrow Never Dies ever reached cinemas, we owe to the Broccoli empire's determination not to let a cash cow expire before it comes to market—or even to look as if it might have. The cow here is a brindled thing, part bad part good. But it moves like merry thunder. This cow could win the Grand National by several lengths and a hedge.

We know we are safe right from the pre-credits sequence. Pierce Brosnan's Bond (the with the stubble that troubled lead actress Teri Hatcher) is at a terrorist boot sale somewhere in ex-USSR and must hijack a warhead-carrying fighter plane as Nato prepares to bomberash the party. The suspense is agonising. Never mind Nato. We know there are only a few precious, ticking minutes before the Shirley Bassey soundalike will launch into the title song.

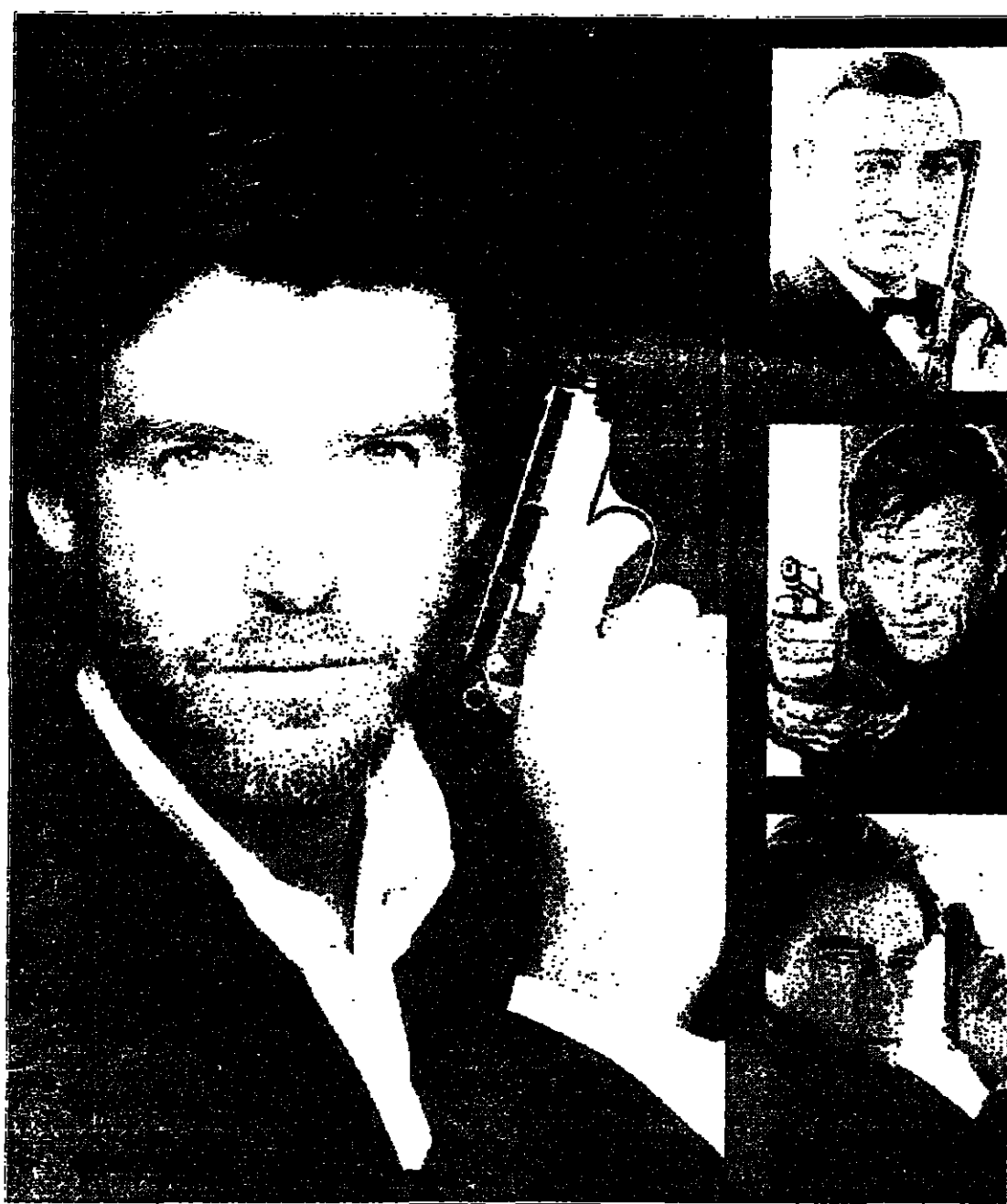
("To-moh-row nev-ahh die-ies") while computer graphic nudes go whirly all over the screen.

Thereafter it is cars, bedrooms, explosions and double entendres, in no particular order. And there is Jonathan Pryce in fine form as a world media tycoon, a sort of Rupert Murdoch with extra madness. His character's



self-appointed mission is to provoke war between China and Britain, for reasons I understood at the time but am a little hazy about now. The Bond films stuttered into ordinariness in the late 1980s, when Timothy Dalton rashly tried to play him as a human being. Brosnan, improving on his own dullish start, is now accumulating the essentials: smugness, smartness and an ear-to-ear, perfectly groomed superficiality. He gained 29 pounds for the role—pounds weight not pounds sterling, which were £5 million—and he fills out the suits. He also has the right style when telling a Danish lover "I always enjoy studying a new tongue," which leads to Ms Moneypenny's comment dur-

**Different faces of James Bond: Pierce Brosnan (main), Sean Connery (top right), Roger Moore (middle), and Timothy Dalton.**



ing "a simultaneous phone call. 'You always were a cunning linguist, James.' The remote-control BMW, the car chase through downtown Saigon and the pyrotechnical climax in Pryce's billion-dollar armoured houseboat, with fine views of the South China Sea and

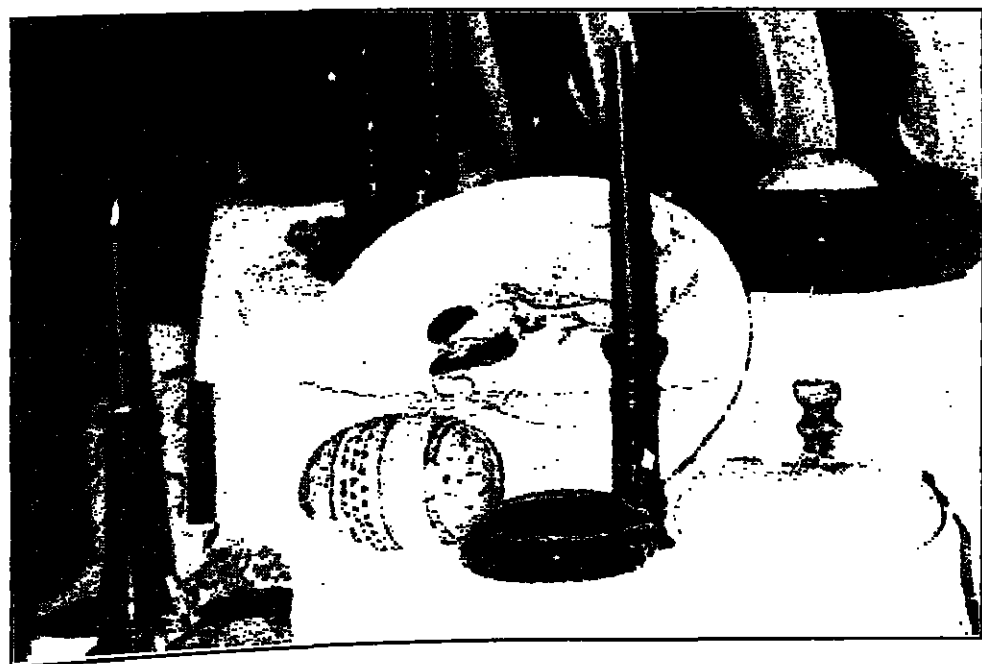
the end of the world, are all good value. Director Roger Spottiswoode—he who tangled with screenwriter Bruce Feirstein, first firing then rehiring him—earned his action licence by editing for Peckinpah and directing Under Fire.

My only quibble concerns supporting stalwarts. "M", when played by that fine walking head-cold Bernard Lee, used to have a whole briefing scene to himself. Here Dame Judi Dench must lob guerrilla one-liners from a standing position in op rooms. No wonder she was upset when even these were

changed). And Desmond Llewellyn's Q surely demands more than a tiny cameo. Here, he barely has time to list the BMW's rockets, smashproof windows, high-volt electrified bodywork, metal spikes to puncture enemy tyres, satellite down-loader, nuclear touchpad and, we trust, cigarette lighter and AM/FM radio. A Further Gesture is an odd title; the phrase often completes itself with "would be futile."

Financial Times Syndication

## Al Khazzaf Originality in design



SINCE ITS establishment in 1995, Al Khazzaf ceramists has launched a new concept in design combining both aesthetics with function. Their underlying philosophy is that design should serve and be subordinate to function rather than present itself as art for art's sake.

Al Khazzaf ceramists have produced pottery based on Byzantine, Roman and Islamic designs and concepts which also serve as functional objects such as tea and coffee pots and cups, vases, fruit bowls, mugs, and a wide range of kitchen ware. They have also developed mosaic trays in addition to murals that have been inspired by original mosaic paintings found in Jordan.

Its products are each a unique work of art that is never repeated. Each piece is produced by hand and although it is hard to tell the difference between two identical works by looking at them, each

piece is original in all sense of the word. Al Khazzaf has also been conscious of environmental and health considerations using only non-toxic and high-quality material for its products.

Al Khazzaf is prepared, on order, to produce special designs and products that meet individual demands and requirements.



## Moka's delicious Christmas cake

CHRISTMAS TIME will be here before you know it. Why not surprise your friends, family and business acquaintance with Moka's delicious traditional classic Christmas cake. They will long recall its delicious flavor and your thoughtfulness in sending them this unique Christmas gift from Caffe Moka.

All you have to do is choose the size and decoration of your cake from Moka's special Christmas album. Place your order, you can rest assure that your gift will be delivered on time, and exactly as you requested.

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How many Bookshops in Amman stock the entire 1997 list of N.Y. Times Bestsellers:  
**Only One**

How many bookshops in Amman imported 3000 titles of books published in 1997  
**Only One**

How many Bookshops in Amman has a most comprehensive children library?  
**Only One**

**AMMAN BOOKSHOP**  
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Continued from page 12  
Grand Ballroom on December 27, 1997.  
For more information please call our sales department at 641361 ext. 2238.

### Le Meridien

It's the season for the little ones. So take your kids to our Children's Christmas party for goodies, gifts and photos with Santa Claus on 24 December at the Grand Ballroom.

China Town and the Coffee Shop will be open as usual for meals. So round up the folks for a reunion and we'll serve up some really festive flavors. Family and friends can gather round for a joyful time. Santa foots some of the bill so enjoy the feasts we're serving up in all our restaurants.

X-mas Day is one of great joy. At the Coffee Shop a Special Lunch and Dinner international Buffet at JD12. For Children 12 years old and below. JD 5 net. Santa will be there with his bag of gifts for kids.

At Andalusia, a Special Christmas Dinner menu at JD 14 per person including one glass of champagne. Our pianist entertains you for an even heartier meal.

At China Town, we serve a Special Christmas Menu at JD per person including one glass of champagne.

Celebrate the eve of '98 on 31 December. Welcome the New Year in our restaurants. Fill up on great meals and get set to party past midnight.

At Andalusia, there's a nine-course menu JD 35 per person. At China Town, our New Year Menu. JD25 per person. There's a disk jockey playing the hits for your entertainment.

At Latinos, our New Year Dinner Menu is at JD25 per person. The Latin Music Duet serves music to dine by.

The Night Club is set for celebrations with a New Year Four-Course Menu at JD 25 per person. A DJ will provide entertainment.



**Amman Marriott Hotel**

The Hotel's pastry shop is open for the not only the 12 days

Continued on page 14





# Merry Christmas Happy New Year



Continued from page 13

of Christmas, but the entire season with delicious goodies. You'll find everything you need here to fill—Traditional Christmas cake, seasonal cookies and puddings, Buche de Nofe and a perfectly trimmed turkey cooked just the way you like it.

□ Sometimes Rudolph, the legendary reindeer, needs a little help filling up his sleigh with toys and gifts for the less well off children in our midst. He is making an appearance on 25 December at the Marriott.

□ At Champions, we know what parties are all about. Book your office Christmas party, up to 20 people, and celebrate in style. Festive 3 course traditional turkey meal.

□ Whisking his way through the snow-topped peaks of Lapland, Santa Claus will stop over at the Amman Marriott Hotel to delight your little ones. Be there to greet him, and capture on film the magical look on their faces.

□ The spirit of Christmas will fill the lobby of the Amman Marriott Hotel, starting 18 December. The voices of Amman's school children will entertain with a collection of traditional festive songs and carols.

□ Lunchtime on the 24th is when Santa Claus will be waiting to entertain your little ones at a Champions. Watch their eyes light up with the magic of the season. A kids mini-buffet will tempt their taste buds and see them delight in our magical Christmas games and seasonal cartoons.

□ Get cracking at Champions this Christmas on the 24th. Indulge in our full Christmas buffet including juicy turkey from the US.

□ On Christmas Eve, December 24th come on down to the Marriott Garden for a less than silent night of "Open Air Karaoke" singing. Join the crowd from 7.00 pm and warm up with our wonderful mulled wine and let your heart sing the praises of a seasonal spirit.

□ On 25 December, there is a complete traditional Christmas dinner and dessert with all the trimmings so all you have to do is sit back and enjoy the spirit of the season. Open all day on the 25th, from 12.00 noon until 11.00 p.m.

Our gift to you is our special Champions price, just JD 12,000++ per meal or JD 8,000++ for the turkey plate.

□ Christmas Lunch Buffet at the Ballroom. Keeping The Tradition. Entertainment Prizes and Good Food. For Reservations, please call Ext. 2020.



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of Christmas and the  
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## Books: 'Lives' for enlightenment

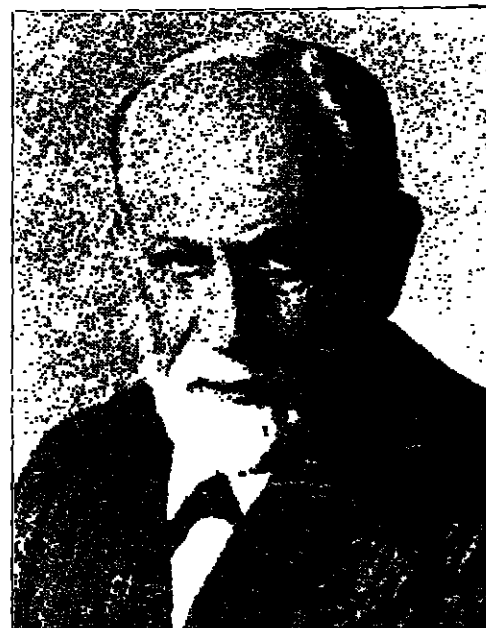
By Jackie Wullschlager

**DISRAELI ADVISED.** "Read no history, only biography, for that is life without theory." Loud and clear, the Victorian cult of heroes stands behind our current strong tradition of biography. You can see it in subjects across the centuries, from A.N. Wilson's life of St Paul to Andrew Morton's book about Princess Diana.

Yet today theory is exactly what makes biography our bestselling, most accessible form of history. A good biography tells two stories: the life, and why, in social and cultural context, that life is representative. At the end of the millennium, our obsession is with people who shaped the defining intellectual movements of our century.

Above most 19th and 20th century subjects, therefore, two figures loom like giant shadows: Freud and Darwin. So much of what we seek to understand about our own lives doubt and unease, self-consciousness and the terror of change comes from them, and it is somehow appropriate that two of the best biographies of 1997 focus on their disciples, men who spread the word through their own impassioned understanding of it.

My biography of the year is *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life*, by James Jones (Norton, £28). No post-war book overturned western social attitudes more dramatically than Kinsey's 1948 *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, with its report that 37 percent of US men had homosexual experiences, 60



Freud

percent enjoyed oral sex and 45 percent committed adultery. An instant bestseller across puritanical small-town America, the book deflated myths about morality, provoked changes in the legal system and assured, says Jones, that Americans could never look at each other with the same innocence again.

Its power came from its apparent neutrality: pages of scientific data and testimonies from Mr Average interviewees. Jones' revelation so psychologically acute, so sensitively explained that we feel it was obvious all along is that behind the mask of scientific researcher was a man with a past, and with a mission. Kinsey, agonized by his own homosexuality, was consumed by the desire to revolutionize the sexual mores which tormented him. Convinced that biologists should be social engineers, determined to prove he was not a freak, he made science serve him.

As Saul Bellow said, "there's nothing like a shameful secret to fire a man up": this sympathetic account is a model exploration of how a private imagination fuels a public life, of the flawed thinking of a visionary. Unflinching, vital, beautifully written, it is a literary masterpiece.

Huxley: Evolution's

**High Priest** (Michael Joseph, £20) is part two of *Adrian Desmond's* life of "Darwin's bulldog." Desmond calls Thomas Huxley "the salesman of evolution, forging that modern godless universe, millions of years old, terrifying and awe-inspiring," that is our Victorian inheritance.

This is a Huxley for our times, symbol of middle-class ascent, who "made Social Darwinism the stern taskmaster to reconcile the workbench to capitalism, pointing the way to a Labour 20th century." It is also a vibrant, original portrait, superb on Huxley's intellectual life, moving on the cost of being a pioneer the first professional scientist, corner of the word agnostic: "There was a flawed perfection to his messy life: the conquering heights, the prehistoric visions...the inward collapses and outward bravura."

Contemporaries called Huxley the "Apostle Paul of the new teaching." In Paul: *The Mind of the Apostle* (Sinclair Stevenson, £17.99), the apocalyptic vision, tied to an instinct for popularizing, makes another story of a famous disciple enthralling. A.N. Wilson's Paul is "a richly imaginative religious genius...able to draw out a mythological and archetypal significance from the death of a Jewish hero." It is a quintessential 1990s interpretation, faith emerging from individual spiritual dilemma and sustained by art, not miracles: Paul is "the first of the great romantic poets, the man who made the crucified Jesus his inner light" and so founded Christianity. I loved the bright, flowing backcloth here: newly-built Hellenized Jerusalem; the commercial centres Corinth and Ephesus; the world of roads and trade, superstition and political tension that roots this story of an emotional volcano in the concrete facts of history.

Biography, with its emphasis on the inner mind, the gap between private and public man, is a genre steeped in psychoanalytical thinking. Yet a great life of Freud eludes us, and Paul Ferris' *Dr Freud: A Life* (Sinclair Stevenson, £20) is another disappointment. In the introduction, Ferris shoots himself in the foot: "Freud is what you want him to be," he writes, with that maddening 1990s veneer of tolerance which is a cover-up for having no opinions. But biography without a passionate

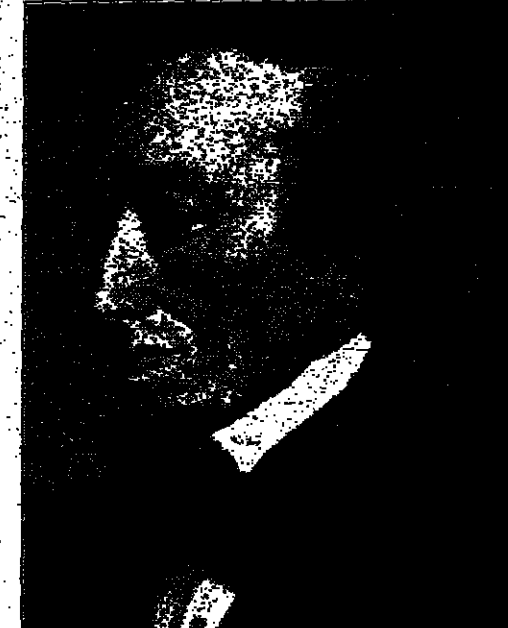
point-of-view is like bread without yeast: flat, uninspired, full of "sniping comments" ("he may have felt, as authors do, that he had written his heart out" ... "his unconscious had let him down again") which do not rise into a coherent picture.

"The complete sympathy of a complete detachment" was Hugh King-smith's biographical ideal. Suffused with wonder and enthusiasm, elegant, full of insight, the best literary lives of 1997 match this model: Claire Tomalin's *Jane Austen: A Life* (Viking, £20), Andrew Morton's *Keats* (Faber, £20), Michael Holroyd's one-volume *Bernard Shaw* (Chatto, £25). Otherwise, lives of English writers are on the wane subjects are simply running out. Instead, an explosion of interest in foreign writers

new lives of Camus, Simenon, Hugo, Chekhov and a shift of focus to artists and composers. Outstanding is Jenny Uglow's panoramic *Hogarth: A Life and A World* (Faber, £25) the star of the Whitbread shortlist and the ravishingly illustrated Stanley Spencer (Yale, £25): Fiona McCarthy revolutionizes our ideas about this very English artist, emphasizing his landscapes, his politics and his search for a new expressiveness of sex.

Twentieth-century figures, and an emphasis on the link between sex and creativity, dominate this year: Ian Gibson's sensational *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* (Faber, £20); Frances Spalding's bed-hopping Duncan Grant (Chatto, £25); Jonathan Carr's *The Real Mahler* (Constable, £19.95): ailing composer tormented by glamorous wife.

Andrew Morton's *Diana: Her True Story in Her Own Words* (Michael O'Mara, £15.99) will be course sell more than all these put together. There is something tasteful about Morton boarding a plane to meet his publisher hours after Diana's death, which brings home what a peeping-Tom industry biography is. But the profusion of bestsellers about Princess Diana pinpoints, too, our need for iconography, for myths about beauty and goodness and damaged lives which embody our own fantasies and fears. The parade of photographic records of Diana's life *Diana: Princess of Wales: A Tribute in Photographs* (Michael O'Mara, £15.99), *Diana Remembered* (Macmillan, £14.99)



Disraeli

are modern reworkings of the Victorian heroic school of biography, sentimental, oddly attractive, in a cynical age, in their attempts to shape life as a fairy tale.

Many near-contemporary biographies attempt similar romances. But flop; weak story; schizofrenic tone; style plodding like ABC. I remain unenchanted by new lives of Julie Andrews, Ingrid Bergman, Clementine Churchill.

Then there are the shockers. Witch of the Year is Kitty Kelley, for *The Royals* (Warner, £22), a poisonous, factless black fantasy of the House of Windsor. The libellous book is banned in the UK over its revenge is Duncan Campbell's *The Story of Caroline Beale* (Macmillan, £16.99), the girl arrested at JFK airport with a dead baby in her bag and mauled by the US courts: expect Louise Woodward's life in print before 1998 is many weeks old. *Spit, it's all lies, mostly read like faded tabloids*, says one harpington. *Jacqueline du Pre: A Girl in the Family* (Chatto, £16.99), revealing the cellist as a monster of egotism and destructiveness. Near-incessant adultery in rural England, related by the surviving sister, in twin-set and pearls, who let her husband leave her bed nightly to sleep with brilliant Jackie in the attic. It is like finding Freud's Vienna in our own back yard: unforgettable in its demonstration of how bizarre and various are human lives.

Financial Times Syndications



Keates

## Warm chestnuts, new 'Classics' for the Holidays

By Susan King

SOMETIMES IT'S hard to get into the Christmas spirit with all the hustle and bustle. If you need a little yuletide lift, head to your local video store and check out some of these holiday tapes.

Cary Grant is at his most Cary Grant charming in the heart-felt 1947 fantasy "The Bishop's Wife" (HBO). Grant plays a handsome angel named Dudley who is sent to Earth to help a troubled young bishop (David Niven) and his vivacious wife (Loretta Young). Monty Woolley, Elsa Lanchester and Gladys Cooper head the

fine supporting cast. Nominated for the best film Oscar, Avoid the 1996 remake "The Preacher's Wife."

Barbara Stanwyck and Dennis Morgan star in "Christmas in Connecticut" (MGM), a breezy 1945 comedy about a successful magazine columnist who passes herself off as a Martha Stewart-type. But when a handsome war veteran is invited to her home for the holidays as a publicity stunt, she is forced to master the fine art of homemaking. Reginald Gardiner and Sydney Greenstreet also star. Don't rent the dreadful 1992 TV remake.

Bob Clark directed the

laugh-out-loud funny "A Christmas Story" (MGM), the acclaimed 1983 adaptation of Jean Shepherd's autobiographical story about a young boy's pursuit to get a Red Ryder BB-Gun for Christmas. Peter Billingsley plays the determined lad and Darren McGavin and Melinda Dillon are a hoot as his rather strange parents.

Shepherd narrates. If you're in the mood for an offbeat Christmas movie, there's 1984's "Gremlins" (Warner)—sort of a perverted "It's a Wonderful Life." Joe Dante directed this box-office smash about a small town being trashed on Christmas

Eve by hundreds of nasty, vile gremlins. Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates, Hoyt Axton and Polly Holliday are the human stars.

Boris Karloff narrates the 1966 cartoon classic "Dr Seuss, How the Grinch Stole Christmas," a magical adaptation of Dr Seuss' tale about the green, slimy Christmas-hating Grinch, who tries to steal Christmas from the Whos of Whoville.

Robert Mitchum didn't always play the sleepy-eyed tough guy. In the 1949 romantic comedy "Holiday Affair," he gives a sweet performance as kind, gentle salesman who falls for a pretty widow (Janet Leigh) with a young son and a jealous fiancé (Wendell Corey). Lightweight but enjoyable.

Christmas movies don't come much more romantic and charming than 1940's "The Shop Around the Corner." Directed by the master Ernst Lubitsch, this frothy delight finds James Stewart and Margaret Sullivan as two feuding clerks at a Budapest, Hungary, store who fall in love as pen pals. Stewart and Sullivan, who made several films together, are wonderful and the splendid supporting cast includes Joseph Schildkraut and Frank Morgan.

Albert Finney is perfectly cast as Charles Dickens miserly "Scrooge," a lavish but uneven 1970 musical version of the yuletide classic. However, Finney can't sing his way out of a paper bag, so you may want to turn the sound down during his musical numbers.

The score, penned by Leslie Bricusse, includes the Oscar-nominated "Thank You Very

Much." Alec Guinness plays a particularly gruesome Marley's ghost. Edith Evans and Kenneth More also star.

The perfect Christmas movie to watch with your entire family is 1994's "Little Women" (Columbia TriStar). Gillian Armstrong's exquisite adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's enduring novel about the tightly knit, loving March family. Winona Ryder is luminous as the independent-minded Jo March. Christian Bale, Susan Sarandon and Claire Danes also star. Thomas Newman's score is haunting.

Also available is the enchanting 1933 version (MGM), starring Katharine Hepburn as Jo, George Cukor directed the stylish production, which features Jean Parker and Paul Lukas.

Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without the 1954 cornball delight "White Christmas" (Paramount). Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Vera Ellen and Rosemary Clooney star in this cheery Technicolor musical, which features a slew of wonderful Irving Berlin ditties, including the title tune, "Count Your Blessings" and "Sisters."

And of course, there's Der Bingle's "Holiday Inn" (Universal, \$15), the 1942 classic in which he introduced the Oscar-winning tune "White Christmas." Crosby plays an entertainer who owns an inn that's only open on the holidays. Fred Astaire also stars. Just fast forward through the very politically incorrect blackface musical numbers.

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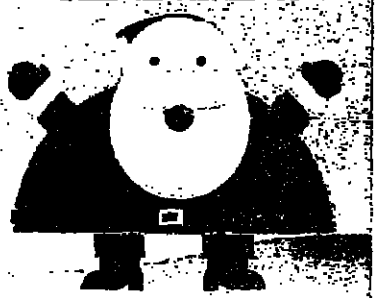
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# Merry Christmas Happy New Year



Christmas music

## New names roast the same old chestnuts

By J.D. Considine

THERE'S NOTHING unusual about dreading the holidays. Some people can't cope with the pressures of gift shopping, while others get anxious over family issues that arise each season. Sometimes, just the amount of work that goes into Christmas preparations fills folks with apprehension.

My case is a bit different. What I dread has to do with Christmas music.

At the moment, there is a 3-foot stack of Christmas CDs teetering in my living room. There are 91 albums piled there, everything from Hanson's "Snowed In" to RuPaul's "Ho Ho Ho." They started coming in August, and new ones are arriving daily.

And the vast majority are rubbish. Still, Christmas music is big business. A successful Christmas album can sell thousands of copies a season, with some artists—Kenny G, Mariah Carey, Amy Grant and Barbra Streisand—selling in the millions.

Even though dozens of Christmas albums are made each year, there aren't dozens

of Christmas songs to choose from. So hapless reviewers like myself end up hearing the same songs over and over and over again, in every style imaginable. Over the years, I've endured everything from disco Christmas (such as the Salsoul Orchestra's relentless "Christmas Jollies") to hard-core carols (including the punk classic "O! to the World").

Why people do this is beyond me. If you want to hear techno at Christmas time, then put on a techno album. There's no reason to drag "Silent Night" into it.

"Acid X-mas" (Street Beat 1032) does anyway, offering acid house and techno versions of carols for those who prefer Christmas raves to Christmas revels. As is usually the case with this stuff, these tracks are not exactly long on melody, making more use of droning synths and thumping electro-

beats than of the songs themselves. As such, whole minutes go by before Bass Trip's thumping rendition of "Silent Night" even touches on the tune, while "Little Drummer's Dub" by DJ Voodoo vs. Mr. Knightlife featuring Sunny completely avoids the verse

and chorus of "Little Drummer Boy"—though, that's not entirely a bad thing.

If you want to hear synthesizers take a more traditional role in Christmas music, look to the newest release from Mannheim Steamroller, "Christmas Live" (American Gramophone 1997).

By blending synths with recorder, harpsichord and violin, the group gives "Pat a Pan" a quaint, old European feel, though with all the modern conveniences. (Think of it as the musical equivalent to the iPod Center.) But when the synths take over, they make "Joy to the World" sound like somebody's 11 o'clock news theme.

By rights, Jim Brickman's "The Gift" (Windham Hill 11242) ought to appeal to much of the Mannheim Steamroller audience. A pop instrumentalist with a pretty good track record, Brickman seems a perfect candidate for seasonal success. And when he sticks to piano instrumentals, his album is quite pleasant, thanks to his soothingly upbeat arrangements of such carols as "Joy to the World" and "The First Noel."

Trouble is, Brickman isn't interested in staying instrumental and so brings in a crew of guest vocalists, including Kenny Loggins, country star Collin Raye, and the contemporary Christian vocal Point of Grace. None add much to the album, though, and the treacly, semi-romantic sentiments of the title give a sour taste to the rest of the album.

Celtic music is the season's other big trend. Given how little Irish traditional music has brought to Christmas catalog



On the plus side, Jeff Beck turns in a lovely reading of "Amazing Grace." But since when is that a Christmas carol?

On "Come On Christmas" (Reprise 46683), Dwight Yoakam has no such problems keeping focused. From his honky-tonjo version of "Silver Bells" to his surprisingly jazzy rendition of "The Christmas Song" (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire), Yoakam shows that a smart singer can have his carols and his pop content, too.

The album's most pleasant surprise is "Santa Can't Stay." A Yoakam original, it sees Christmas through the eyes of a kid who can't understand why Mommy and her new boyfriend aren't happy to see Santa—or what Jolly Old St. Nick is doing driving Daddy's car.

Of course, back in the early days of rock 'n' roll, it was quite common for artists to write their own Christmas songs. Whether this was out of respect for traditional carols or simply because they hoped to make the kind of money Johnny Marks made off of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" is hard to say, but the end result included some fairly memorable Christmas songs, including "Jingle Bell Rock," "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" and "Merry Christmas Baby."

All of those are included in "Hot Rod Holiday" (The Right

Stuff 21181). A solid celebration of pre-Beatles seasonal songs, it boasts the Beach Boys' "Little Saint Nick," Chuck Berry's "Run Rudolph Run," and the Ventures' version of "Frosty the Snowman." And, lest we forget that there were dance craze cash-ins even then, the album includes the Marceels' "Merry Twistmas."

It's hard not to think of those rock 'n' roll glory days when listening to Hanson's "Snowed In" (Mercury 314 536 717). For one thing, the Hanson kids do many of the same tunes. "Little Saint Nick," "Run Rudolph Run" and "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" among them. For another, the Hanson lads have included a few tunes of their own (though it's hard to imagine "Everybody Knows the Claus" ever becoming a seasonal perennial).

Mostly, though, it's the trio's youthful exuberance that makes Hanson seem like true heirs to the rock 'n' roll Christmas albums of yore.

Although the title and concept behind RuPaul's "Ho Ho Ho" (Rhino 72936) carries a certain campy charm, the music itself never delivers what it promises. In most cases, the punch lines lose their punch by the second verse, so "RuPaul the Red-Nosed Drag Queen" and its ilk end up sounding twice as long as they should. Maybe Ru should ask Santa to put some new writers under the tree. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

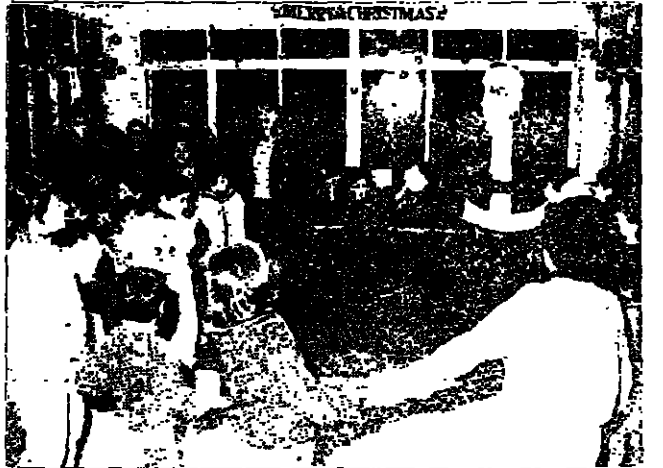
## Villa Cafe celebrates Christmas

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guitarist Saif who has a warm genuine voice to welcome to a place that will bring you a special night. Always be in touch with our special atmosphere, have a dream filled with bright colors on Christmas and a great hope on the New Year. ■

## Kids invade the Inter.Con



Hotel InterContinental Jordan received an invasion of kids to partake in preparing the "environmentally-friendly" Christmas Tree that was put up at the Hotel Lobby on 14 December. Kids had a great time cutting, painting, colouring, different shapes are part of the decoration for the Christmas Tree.

They were all children of the Hotel's staff and their relatives. Eight of those children were chosen by a draw and their eight wishes will be fulfilled by the hotel. This event of using an "environmentally-friendly" decoration for the Christmas Tree is the first of its kind in Jordan. ■

## Christmas Revels

By Joseph McLellan

THE CHRISTMAS record I find myself replaying most often this year is "To Drive the Cold Away: Traditional Songs and Dances for the Winter Solstice" (Revels CD 1098), taped live at the Christmas Revels in Boston in 1994 and 1995 and featuring music from Sweden, Finland, Iceland and the United States. This is high-energy, rambunctious, sometimes raucous music, calculated to draw you in and start you dancing, which is what the Revels are all about.

Piffaro, a Philadelphia-based Renaissance wind band, has released on Deutsche Grammophon a collection of music from the Spanish Renaissance. Its blend of energy and polish is well suited to the Revels repertoire.

Christmas Classics: Four classical works related to the season have received superlative new recordings. Handel's "Messiah" (Orion 5000, with libretto) is the first CD on a new label and features Apollo's Fire, the Cleveland baroque orchestra, a small choir and excellent soloists, notably soprano Julianne Baird—led by harpsichordist conductor Jeanette Sorrell.

Benjamin Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols" (Sony 62615, with texts), a Christmas classic and Britten's most popular choral work, is exquisitely sung by the Westminster Choir. Martin Neary directing with a fine sample of Britten's other religious works: "Rejoice in the Lamb," with a charming text by the 18th-century poet Christopher Smart; "Canticle II," which tells the Old Testament story of Abraham and Isaac with a medieval text; "A Hymn to the Virgin," with a text in English and Latin dating from around 1300; and two less familiar works: "A Wedding Antiphon," Op. 46, and "Antiphon," Op. 56b, with text by the 17th-century poet George Herbert.

Berlioz's "L'Enfance du Christ" (Harmonia Mundi HMC 901632.33, two CDs with libretto) has elements of opera and oratorio and is not really like any other Christmas music. It is tender, winsome and at times intensely dramatic. This performance, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, is comparable in quality to his recent superb Harmonia Mundi recording of Brahms' German Requiem.

Also on Harmonia Mundi is a lively, idiomatic and well-sung performance of the six cantatas of Bach's Christmas Oratorio (HMC 901630.31, two CDs with libretto), with Rene Jacobs conducting the Akademie fur Alte Musik, Berlin, the RIAS Chamber Chorus and four excellent soloists. ■

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## Three trees to Amman Municipality

On SUNDAY 14 December, the Management and Staff of Hotel InterContinental Jordan visited the Amman Municipality and donated three trees on the occasion of the "12 days before Christmas" activities.

The trees were afterwards planted by Mr Jonathan Soper, general Manager of the Hotel and a representative from the Municipality at Al Yuobil Circle.

This is part of the many environmental activities run by InterContinental Jordan to preserve nature and to keep the Kingdom green. ■



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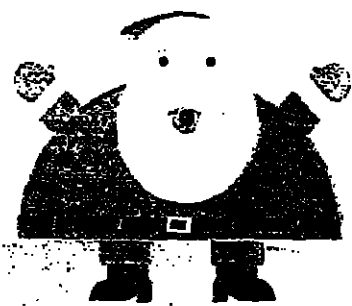
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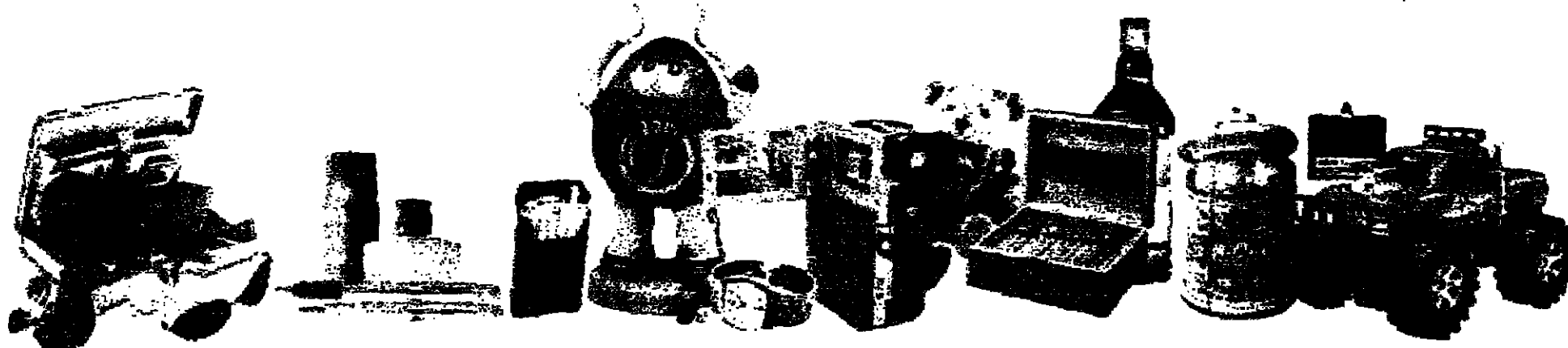


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